43 PAGE PREVIEW SPECIAL

Computer Games

EXCLUSIVE!

Contract JACK

The Prequel to No One Lives Forever 2

Plus

12 More Reasons Why Your PC Rules

Including

Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines, DOOM 3, The Sims 2, EverQuest II

AUGUST 2003

HALF-LIFE 2

THE MATRIX ONLINE

MIDDLE EARTH ONLINE

If Death Couldn't Stop Him...

Dragonhawks can enshroud enemy fortifications in dense clouds of mist.

Warden - The Warden's shadowy powers help her hunt down her evil prey.

Spellbreakers steal enemy enchantments and bestow them upon their comrades.

Blood Mage - The Blood Mage is quick to take vengeance upon any who threaten his brethren.

TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB	Blood
	Violence

™ or registered trademarks of Blizzard Entertainment in the U

WARCRAFT®
FROZEN THRONE™
EXPANSION SET

Can You?

BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT
blizzard.com

S. and/or other countries. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners.

ACTUAL PC SCREENSHOT

PC
CD ROM

MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Violence
Strong Language
Blood and Gore
Strong Sexual Content

© 2003 Rockstar Games, Inc. The R logo is a registered trademark of Take Two Interactive Software, Inc. "Epic" and Reg. U.S. Pat. & Tm. Off. Marca Registrada./© 2003 Sony Music Entertainment Inc. All other marks and trademarks are properties of their respective owners.

grand theft auto
vice city
NOW AVAILABLE ON PC
"IT'S NOT JUST A NEW FRONTIER FOR GAMES, IT'S A NEW FRONTIER FOR HUMANITY"
ROLLING STONE
"GRAND THEFT AUTO III IS A NATIONAL OBSESSION. ITS SEQUEL BORDERS ON SOMETHING MORE: ART."
TIME MAGAZINE
WWW.ROCKSTARGAMES.COM/VICECITY
SOUNDTRACK ALBUMS AVAILABLE EXCLUSIVELY ON EPIC RECORDS
WWW.VICECITYRADIO.COM
Note: Rockstar will be following IDSA guidelines for M rated games in the marketing of this game. This game contains violent language and behavior and may not be appropriate for persons under the age of 17. It is a comic interpretation of gangster activity and the story, names and incidents portrayed herein are fictitious. No identification or similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual events is intended or should be inferred. Any resemblance is coincidental. The makers and publishers of this videogame do not in any way endorse, condone or encourage this kind of behavior.

SAVAGE™

The Battle for Newerth

COMING SOON

Real time strategy meets first person shooter

Multiplayer mayhem with no monthly fee

Visit www.s2games.com for more information.

© 2003 S2 Games,LLC. Savage is a trademark of S2 Games, LLC. iGames is a trademark of iGames Publishing, LLC.

iGAMES PUBLISHING

S2GAMES

PC WINDOWS

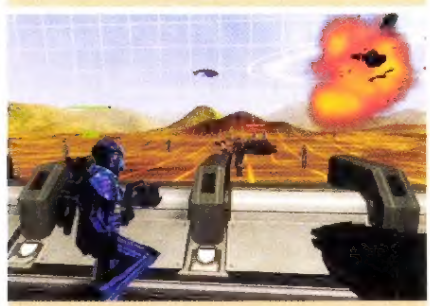
RP

Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for more info.

52 Viva La PC!

26 Slam Dunk

32 Prince of Persia



80 PlanetSide

cover story

52 Viva la PC!
As LL Cool J said, don't call it a comeback. There are at least 13 good reasons why your PC should still be your primary place to play games, such as: City of Heroes, DOOM 3, Dungeons & Dragons: The Temple of Elemental Evil, EverQuest II, Half-Life 2, The Matrix Online, Middle Earth Online, Rome: Total War, The Sims 2, Tribes Vengeance, Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines, World of WarCraft, and Contract JACK: The Official Prequel to No One Lives Forever 2.

featured

26 Slam Dunk
With an impressive lineup of sequels, remakes, and online games, PC gaming dominates the 2003 Electronic Entertainment Expo. By Steve Bauman

32 Grace Under Pressure
Move over, Barishnikov, it's a new level of acrobatic grace with Prince of Persia: Sands of Time. By Tom Chick

80 Battlefield: Future
Welcome to PlanetSide, where 64-player battles become so 2002.
By Benjamin E. Sones

contents

departments

18 Rebound and Q&A
30 Mods & Ends

incoming

34 Civilization: Conquests
34 Battlecruiser Generations
36 Dark Age of Camelot: Trials of Atlantis
38 Mythica
39 Exarch
40 Lineage II
40 Space Colony
42 Call of Cthulu
44 Evil Genius
44 Hidden and Dangerous II
46 Uru: Ages Beyond Myst
46 Age of Mythology: The Titans
48 Armed & Dangerous
48 Kings of War
50 Shadow Ops
50 The Bloody Magic

opinion

82 Grand Theft Auto Vice City
84 Medieval Total War Viking Invasion
86 Enter the Matrix
87 Empire of Magic
89 Enimga: Rising Tide

hardware

90 Radeon 9800 Pro 256MB
91 Velocity Micro Gamer's Edge
92 SystemMax Venture Double X

insider

15 Upfront
94 Applied Game Theory
95 Road to Nowhere
96 View from the Middle
98 Out of the Box
99 Technicalities
100 Three Finger Salute

this month's demo CD

Set Tricorder to "Demo"

Take control of the Hazard Team once again in the demo for Elite Force II, the first-person Star Trek shooter using a heavily updated version of the Quake III engine. Also this month: Dominate the world in Rise of Nations; toil through the jungles of Vietnam in Vietcong; and smash things as The Hulk.

INSTRUCTIONS The disc should autoplay once placed in your CD-ROM. If it does not, double-click on CGCD.EXE to launch the interface. If you have a defective CD-ROM, a replacement can be obtained by sending the original to: Computer Games, ATTN: CD Replacement, 65 Millet St. Richmond, VT 05477.

Computer Games

www.cgonline.com

PUBLISHER
Edward Cespedes

BUSINESS DIRECTOR
Ed Mitchell

EDITORIAL

Editor-in-Chief
Steve Bauman
sbauman@cgonline.com

Features Editor
Cindy Yans
cyans@cgonline.com

Hardware Editor
Jason Cross
jcross@cgonline.com

ART/PRODUCTION

Art Director
Terri Davis

Graphic Artist
Carolynne R. Wang

TECHNOLOGY

Online Director
Liz Halgas

ADVERTISING CONTACTS

Eastern & Central Sales Manager
Jeff Mather
802-767-9144 x531
jmather@cgonline.com

Western Sales Manager
Jeff Lubetkin
818-222-7516
jlubetkin@cgonline.com

CIRCULATION

Circulation Director
Alan Brush

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

US Subscriptions: 800-283-3542
Outside US Subscriptions: 815-734-1216
Online Subscriptions: www.cgonline.com
subscriptions@cgonline.com
PO Box 1965, Marion, OH 43306-8065

One year (12 issues) Basic Rate
US: $19.97 or $29.97 with CD
Canada: $31.97 or $41.97 with CD
Foreign: $43.97 or $53.97 with CD

Back issues available @ 800-699-4263

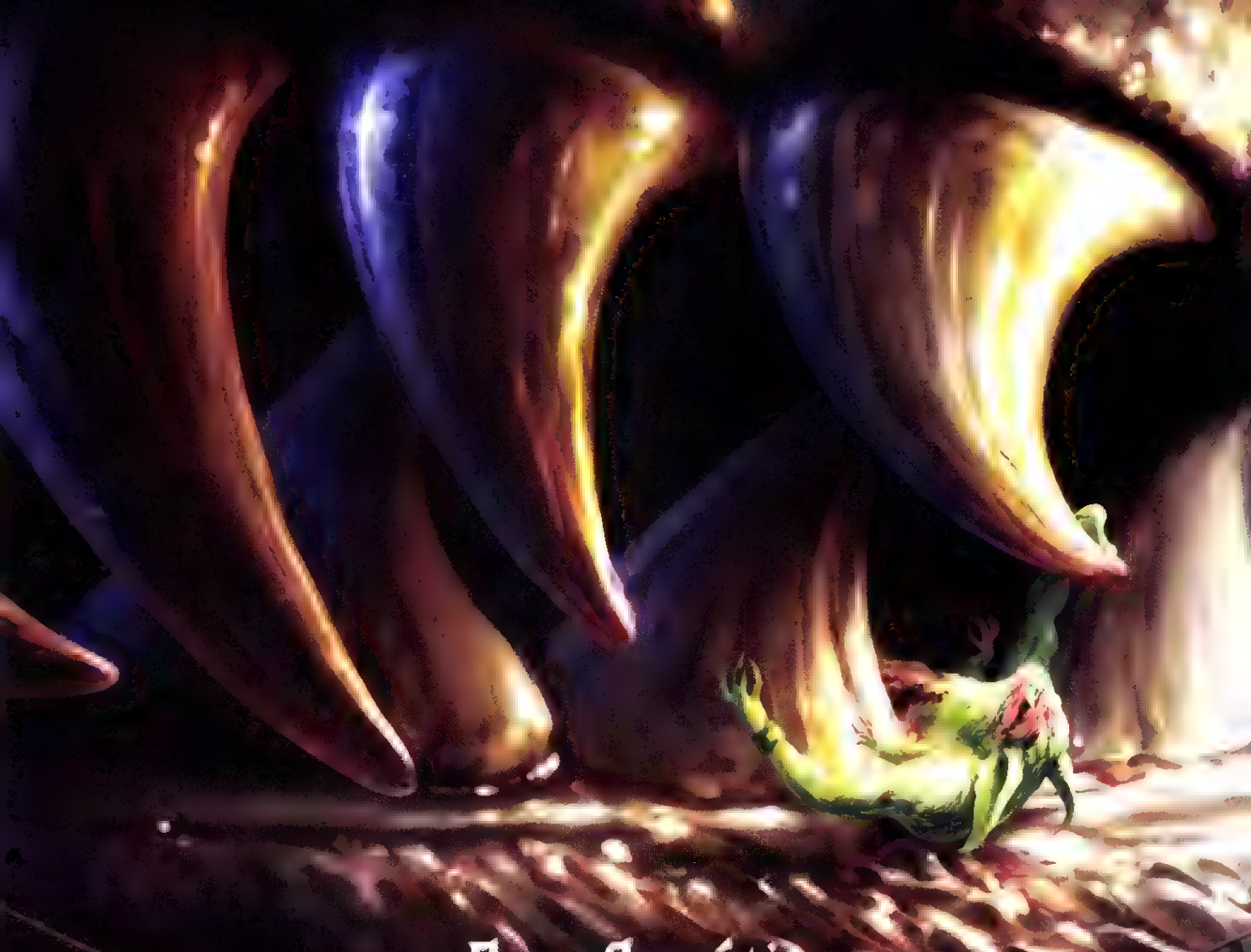
Distributor: Curtis Circulation Co.
201-634-7400

Reprints available. Foreign reprint rights available.

Editorial Offices: 65 Millet Street, Suite 203
Richmond, VT 05477
802-434-3060 FAX: 802-434-6493
editor@cgonline.com

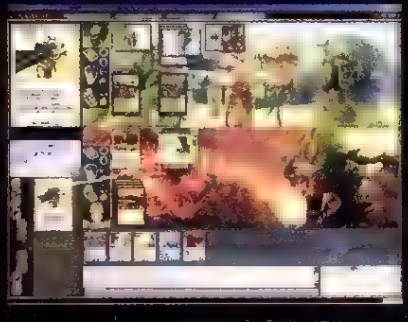
© 2003 Strategy Plus, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction without permission is prohibited. Unsolicited submissions become the property of Strategy Plus, Inc. If you wish to make a submission, please contact the editors.

BPA INTERNATIONAL



Bon Appétit.

SCOURGE™



MAGIC The Gathering® ONLINE

Hungry for action, super-sized? Then tear into the new Scourge™ expansion. Start with a ton of big creatures. Then use new Storm cards to make them even bigger. Now make your opponent eat it.

Serve it up June 23, 2003.

Free trial at
www.mtgonline.com

10th Anniversary MAGIC The Gathering®

Wizards of the Coast

BATTLEFIELD 1942
The battle rages on. Join now.
GAME OF THE YEAR
2002 IGN.COM
MULTIPLAYER GAME OF THE YEAR
COMPUTER GAMING WORLD
GAME OF THE YEAR 2002
COMPUTER GAMES MAGAZINE
U.S. M8A1
B M CO.
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Violence
PC CD ROM

THERE ARE NO MEDALS FOR SECOND PLACE

BATTLEFIELD 1942

2002 GAME *of the* YEAR: PC GAMER

"The realization of our dream PC game. We'll be playing this one for years, and reminiscing about it when we're old."

GAME *of the* YEAR 2002: CGM

"A near perfect balance between fun and realism."

OVERALL GAME *of the* YEAR: IGN.COM

"This game has it all. ... Battlefield has honed just about everyone I know that's laid hands on it."

BEST MULTIPLAYER GAME *of the* YEAR 2002: CGW

"...addictive online warfare..."

MULTIPLAYER GAME *of the* YEAR: GAMESPY.COM

"...an easy and unanimous choice ... best multiplayer game of 2002."

JOIN THE FIGHT AT BATTLEFIELD1942.EA.COM

EA

CHALLENGE EVERYTHING

STAR TREK
ELITE FORCE II
ENGAGE IN EPIC CONFLICT against a horde of alien invaders and other foes in the single player campaign. Deathmatch-style Multiplayer gameplay modes include Holomatch, Capture the Flag, Elimination, Action Hero and many more.
FIRE AT WILL with
including the Gatling
deadly Quantum
with the
For PC CD-ROM and Macintosh
Visit www.st-ef2.com for more information
TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Violence
ritual
ACTIVISION.

Talking Politics

by steve bauman

When readers attack! Political correctness and Command & Conquer Generals

WE PUT THIS issue together in May and early June, and considering that the Electronic Entertainment Expo [see page 26] took place in the same month, it's the obvious time for the annual "state of the game industry from my uncomfortable chair" type editorial.

The industry is fine. Next.

Moving on to another topic, reader Dan Neubert wrote in "mildly disappointed" with the May issue because a magazine that describes itself as an "adult alternative" would feature the "juvenile supplication to the PC altar" that in his view was the review of *Command & Conquer Generals*. "It runs about 15 paragraphs and at least four of them (and the subtitle) subject the reader to his personal biases," he said. "That's about 25% of the article so he can include value judgments such as 'a game for the not so easily offended' and 'its politics are at best dubious, at worst downright offensive and/insensitive.' My, my, isn't he the sensitive one? Couldn't he simply make his point by saying that for those who are overly sensitive and hopelessly politically correct, this game is not for you?

"I think you're so busy congratulating yourself on being the game magazine for adults you forget you're supposed to be a game magazine and not *The New Republic*. I read your magazine to get away from the political turmoil that roils our society, I read it for pure entertainment and to assist me in finding games I might like to buy, again for entertainment not political fulfillment. They are games! Shouldn't your sensitive political musings be submitted to a more appropriate venue? If this is not possible please cancel my subscription immediately, I'll find a less mature gaming magazine for my reviews."

Ouch.

It's curious that he finds this sort of commentary "juvenile." We'd like to think it's more "adult" to look at games beyond a superficial level. But I strongly disagree that this is an issue about being "politically correct;" rather, it's about giving the reader information. If I write, "*Command & Conquer Generals* may contain some offensive content for some people," it doesn't impart much valuable information. What is potentially offensive, and why? You're actually obligated to actually go into some detail about that content so that the reader can make his or her own judgment.

Sorry, there's no way to convince me that politics expressed within a game are not relevant. True, this is a game magazine, but we've always tried to place games in a broader context. For example, if you read the May "Applied Game Theory" column, Henry Jenkins and Kurt Squire brought up the case involving federal district court judge Stephen N. Limbaugh, who ruled that the First Amendment does not protect video games because, in part, he argued that games do not express ideas, that videogames were the equal of bingo or pinball. If you apply the "it's just a game" notion to *Command & Conquer Generals*, you're agreeing with Limbaugh. [At press time, the U.S. Circuit of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit threw out the Limbaugh ruling.]

Without even getting into the icky realm of the "are games art?" debate, if we all agree that games can convey meaning, that meaning can and should be a potential topic for discussion. Whether it's the "dubious" use of anthrax weapons, suicide bombers, and ethnic stereotypes in *Generals*, the homophobia of the "Fag Hunter" machines in *Postal 2*, or the juvenile sexism found in almost every game, these are issues of relevance for a reviewer because they're relevant for a gamer.

This publication is not in danger of turning into *The New Republic*, to use Neubert's example above, any more than it is of becoming *Maxim*, but if you don't want to see these types of discussions on occasion, we apologize in advance for offending your delicate sensibilities. There I go again, being overly sensitive and politically correct. What I'd really like to say is, "There are plenty of alternatives out there that only talk about graphics and how hot the main character is; if that's what floats your boat, if that's all a game review is supposed to be about, don't let the door hit you on the way out."

"I read your magazine to get away from the political turmoil that roils our society, I read it for pure entertainment and to assist me in finding games I might like to buy, again for entertainment not political fulfillment. They are games!"

Behind every deadly Nazi tank is another deadly Nazi tank.

1943, German Panzer tank divisions guard the gates of Europe, controlling the ports of North Africa and the advance of an Allied army with bloody force. Of all the weapons in its arsenal the most feared was its reputation. Face your fears, free North Africa and fight for history to repeat itself.

February 14, 1943 Tunisia, Kasserine Pass

The 5th Panzer division punishes the US 2nd Corps in their initial assault, inflicting grievous losses.

May 7, 1943 Allies Take Tunisia

February 22, 1943 Tunisia, Kasserine Pass

Take back the Pass. Fight through German lines, encountering allied and axis tanks and troops. Steal a German tank and inflict continuous casualties on unsuspecting Nazis.

RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

*Requires Medal of Honor Allied Assault™ to play.

©2003 Electronic Arts Inc. Electronic Arts, EA GAMES, the EA GAMES logo, "You Don't Play, You Volunteer," Medal of Honor Allied Assault, and "Challenge Everything" are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts in the U.S. and/or other countries. Medal of Honor is a trademark or registered trademark of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries, for computer and video game products. All rights reserved. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. "EA GAMES™" is an Electronic Arts™ brand.

JULY 13, 1943 SICILY, ITALY

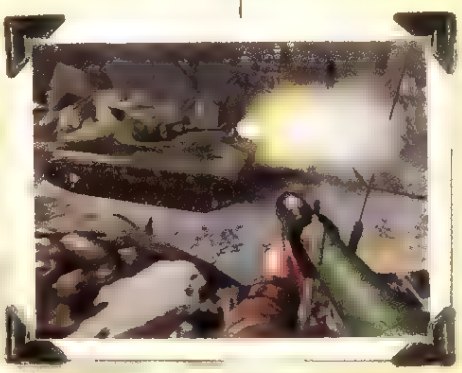
Glide into Sicily under the cover of night with a dead pilot at the controls, crash land in the Italian countryside and find your unit. The assault on the boot begins.

JANUARY 22, 1944 ANZIO MANEUVER

Destroy Germany's K5 rail guns, making the landing at Anzio safe for the Allied 3rd.

OCTOBER 6, 1943 BIZERTE CANAL

Cross the Canal under heavy fire and hit the ground gunning. Engage the enemy in street combat to take command of the German port city.



MAY 17, 1944 EXITING MONTE CASSINO

German Panzer divisions surround you. They can't get away this time. Smash, cripple and exploit the heavy armor with the new British PIAT Anti-Tank Weapon.

ELEVEN SINGLE-PLAYER LEVELS THAT WILL DETERMINE THE FATE OF EUROPE.

ENTER AND EXIT VEHICLES INCLUDING THE M4 SHERMAN TANK. TAKE POWS.

NEW SOLDIER MODELS, SKINS AND VOICES INCLUDING AMERICAN, BRITISH AND ITALIAN TROOPS.

MULTIPLAYER BATTLES: TUG-OF-WAR MODE, OBJECTIVE MODE AND LIBERATION MODE.

You Don't Play, You Volunteer.™ Enlist at moh.ea.com

MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT

SECOND EDITION

BREAKTHROUGH

EXPANSION PACK

EA

CHALLENGE EVERYTHING™

rebound

Summer is the time to start thinking about the games of fall and winter, since no one not named Blizzard Entertainment dares release anything while real humans are out and about, frolicking in the sun. (They really don't get gamers, do they?) As reader Rob Berkowitz said, "Half-Life 2, Halo, Jedi Academy, Homeworld 2... it's going to be a great year." After reading the same articles, Joe Palmer wondered, "How will you pick a game of the year?" Good question, but we'll do it. What does everyone think? As always, send all love and hate mail to *rebound@cgonline.com*

Spector Speak

I would like to comment on the interview with Warren Spector in the June issue. Specifically, Mr. Spector states "I do not care about video game violence. We cause nothing. We do no damage."

Now, if some mainstream media pundit made an opposite claim, we would see gaming experts and media screaming that the person is not qualified to make that statement, that there isn't conclusive evidence to support it; that the speaker doesn't understand games. But unless Mr. Spector is a qualified psychologist/psychiatrist, or has a similar degree at a doctorate level, then I submit that *he* is unqualified to make *his* claims. Does he have any legitimate studies to support his claim? I feel that *CGM* should not print his statements with no counterbalance; you don't do it the other way.

Additionally, and this is really a question that is difficult for anyone to answer...what is the source in the change in our society since, say, the 1950s? Now I am not some naive kid; I realize the '50s weren't as pure as old TV shows might have you believe. But I also think it is clear that from the 50s to now, society has been getting progressively more violent, less respectful of people in general, and all the behaviors that go along with that. So, what is the cause?

Is it reasonable to say that dime novels, movies, comic books, pinball parlors, or television (Mr. Spector's words) are the cause? Nope. Is it reasonable to simply attempt to dismiss them as having zero impact? I think that is naive, stupid, or disingenuous of him. Now, I'm not pinning this on him in particular, ask almost anyone involved in the game industry and you'll get the same answer. They are protecting their livelihood, so I'm not surprised.

These factors do influence people, along with everything else to which they are subjected. So please, let's face these issues and not dismiss them, nor allow a respected member of the gaming industry to do so without pause.

In spite of my comments, I do in fact respect Mr. Spector and his work. Though none of his games since *Wing Commander* are the type I have played, I do follow the industry enough to know he provides a quality product.

Steve Fischer

At the risk of sounding like a gaming magazine fanboy, I've just gotta say I love your style. Independent developer coverage? In-depth articles and lots of them? Every time I open your magazine, I feel like I did when I was 12 years old and had just discovered the mystery novel.

Not sure what I was going to find exactly, but I knew it was going to be good. Hell, I've got nothing more to say and certainly nothing to suggest. You've nailed it! I especially loved the *Thief 3/DX 2* article and Warren Spector's interview. Heck, even the letters to the editor are good.

Mark Lahren

Half-Life 2

I am a semi hardcore computer gamer—I say semi because I can't play all of the time and my machine is far outdated. When I read your preview of *Half-Life 2*, I was excited, but at the same time, I felt disappointed. I was glad that I would be able to play it using my TNT2 card, but the game itself felt, well, wrong.

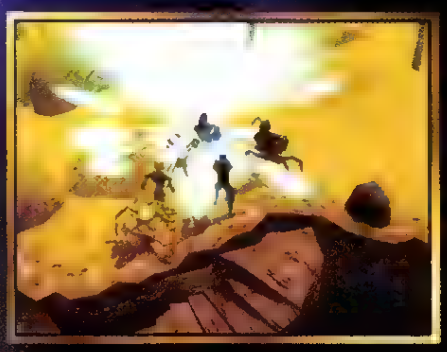
Freeman's new partner seemed dull and recycled. The addition of the city is my major disappointment. The only reason I continue to play *Half-Life* is Black Mesa. The whole secret government complex idea, in theory, seems cheesy and overused. In fact it is cheesy and overused, but *Half-Life* made it work. The excitement of getting close to the surface, the fear of going back down, the thrill of exploration, and the varied areas, that, while they used the same textures over and over again, never got redundant.

When I reached Xen at the end, I didn't feel that the designers were desperate for new ideas, but I felt that it was a logical progression in the course of the game. I purchased *Blue-Shift* and *Opposing Force* because these games elaborated upon the Black Mesa complex. They offered new insight as to what was really going on behind the scenes of the original *Half-Life*.

When I describe *Half-Life* to a friend who doesn't play many computer games the first thing I mention is Black Mesa. It felt right. It was *Half-Life*. *Half-Life 2* may have better graphics, gameplay, and a much more complex storyline, but who really wants to leave Black Mesa behind?

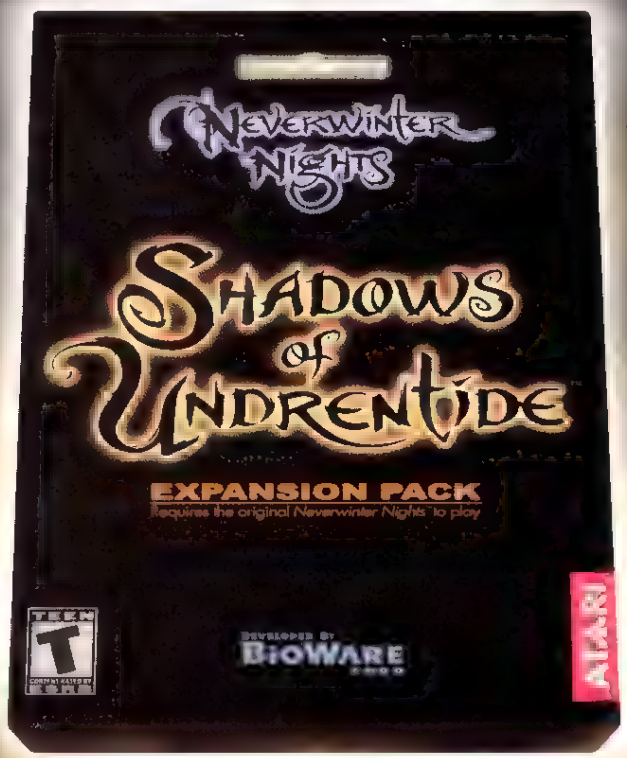
Adam Bagiński

The best RPG just got better.



Neverwinter Nights... a world without limits!

Bring more depth to your *Neverwinter Nights*™ experience with *Neverwinter Nights*™ *Shadows of Undrentide*™, the first official full-length expansion to Bioware's award-winning *Dungeons & Dragons*® fantasy. This all-new, 20-hour adventure features new monsters, weapons, feats, skills and spells, as well as five new prestige classes, including Arcane Archer and Assassin.



Adventure creation is now easier than ever with the enhanced Neverwinter Aurora Toolset, providing players the chance to build richer, more in-depth environments using three all-new tilesets. New wizards allow for quicker plot development, construction of deadly traps and creation of NPC conversations — customize your *Neverwinter Nights*™ world!

Licensed by:

Consumer Products

TEEN
T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

BLOOD
VIOLENCE

ATARI

Nights, Forgotten Realms, the
a subsidiary of Hasbro, Inc.
Spy and the "Powered by
other countries.

Jedi Academy

Ah, another *Jedi Knight* game. This is a good thing. They've decided to (finally) focus on saber combat; another good thing. They're making saber combat more complicated: probably a bad thing. There's always talk that the saber combat system is going to be better: there's going to be more moves, more fun, blah blah. Yet notice, for all the supposed complexity that *Jedi Knight II* added to saber combat, it still eventually devolved into "Star Wars Lancing," just like the original *Jedi Knight*.

In the original, this involved people ridiculously sidestepping around one's target, occasionally zooming in like some sort of uncontrollable asteroid to take a swipe at an opponent. In *Jedi Knight II* this involved choosing heavy combat style and running at the opponent, then at the last minute hitting the right combination of directional buttons to slice and dice your opponent. And in both games, sabers and force powers were ultimately weaker than a good old rocket launcher.

So when LucasArts says they are going to make the saber stronger than the other weapons, I'm suspicious. And when they say saber combat is going to be more complex, I'm downright alarmed. Rather than adding complexity, they should be trying to create a saber combat system that actually rewards skill

Daniel Bourgeois

Being the *Star Wars* junkie I am, I flipped right to the Jedi Academy preview when I received the June issue. I was outraged to find that Andrew S. Bub wrote about the lightsaber, "It is, as one Jedi put it, more elegant than a blaster." This is incorrect. Obi-wan Kenobi's actual words were "Not as clumsy or random as a blaster, an elegant weapon from a more civilized age."

Also this quote upset me speaking of the Twi'leks "Those guys with tentacles growing out of their heads." Everyone knows that the male Twi'leks only have one brain stem on their head whereas the females are the ones that have two. I hope next time you will consult the movies more closely.

Kevin Kremer

Back to the Future

I read your article on the *Full Canvas Jacket* super patch for the *Red Baron II* sims. I had many questions to include issues/problems with the base software not working properly on Windows XP The feature writer, Jeff Lackey, responded to my emails for assistance so that I have located patches to resolve all the *Red Baron* XP problems as well as the sound issue. He researched all the internet sites and provided links that could resolve the problem, which is service not normally seen in any businesses today

John Harms

I have *Red Baron II 3D* on my hard drive but the Voodoo card is long gone so Glide is no longer an option. I installed the patch from Glidos, and then went to Mitchell Kent's site to check out the super patch and will be delighted to send him $28.00.

The cooperation between Jeff Lackey, Mitchell Kent and your outstanding publication in saving this flight sim guarantees my renewal to your magazine. What a scoop. No kidding, well done.

Tom Barrett

Great article. Thank you! This mod has returned me to one of my all time favorite games and communities.

Greg Byrne

Alone Again, Naturally

Just have two points of feedback on the June issue, both stemming from the title (and then contents) of Brett Todd's June "Out of the Box" column

Since *CGM* has started the effort to "age its readership demographic," by becoming a more sophisticated and less teenager centric publication, I took advantage of the headline at the dinner table tonight to ask my 14 year old son and 12 year old daughter if they understood the cultural reference behind the title. Both that it must have something to do with some game, with *MechWarrior* being my son's choice. Kudos! You've just empowered us thirtysomethings. My wife and I were quite amused to break out into verse to sing a bit for the kids.

However, the article mentioned brought a bit of discussion between my wife and I over whether you missed the forest through the trees in the actual article. You mentioned that by far the single player experience reigns supreme in games even though fierce multiplayer exists. As one of your examples, you mentioned how Black Isle was catering to the single-player crowd with the *Heart Of Winter* expansion and it's free *Trials of the Luremaster* patch for *Icewind Dale*. You made the case that this was a way of treating the single player folks to a treat, but missed a point: *Trials of the Luremaster* was also a multiplayer expansion,

ODE TO SHADOWBANE

I have returned to home yet another day,
and what do you know I cannot play.
I sit and think these techs are jerks,
because the login server never works.

Don't petition please,
or call us on the phone,
now we have your money,
so leave us all alone.

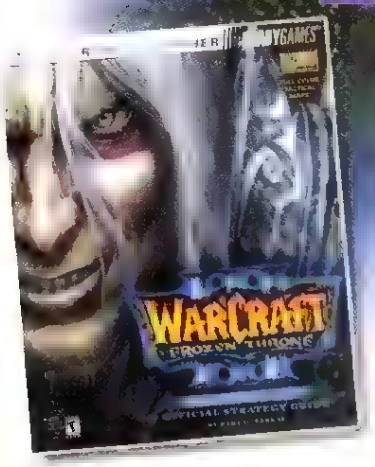
Wait it let me on!
My characters are what I see!,
Oh Nevermind i played 3 minutes,
so i must get sb.exe.

"We thank you for your patience
and we know that it is hard,"
but it's ok for us,
because we have your credit card.

Ubi techs have shown their colors,
a motto is what they've got,
the server may be busy,
but they sure as hell are not.

Onebigmoefoe

INFINITE STRATEGY...



...IN FULL COLOR.

THE OFFICIAL
STRATEGY GUIDE

© 2003 Blizzard Entertainment. All rights reserved. The [illegible] are trademarks or registered trademarks of Blizzard Entertainment in the United States and/or other countries. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners.

BRADYGAMES
TAKE YOUR GAME FURTHER
www.bradygames.com

as evidence by... my wife and I. We played all of *Diablo, Baldur's Gate, Icewind Dale*, and much of *Neverwinter Nights* as multiplayer games, over our LAN. We like to game together, but not with strangers over the net. We are not "LAN gamers" as defined by the shooter crowd; we're LAN gamers because since we first met (literally, as we met in an online game on a local BBS many years ago) we've found that a couple that Games Together, Stays Together

So, we two are "Alone Again, together, Naturally."

Bill and Rebecca Ward

Single player mods? Seriously, I understand spending prolonged periods of time in *The Sims Online* can force a person to consider some weird ideas, but come on. Your "average gamer" would only play a single-player role playing game if he lost his Internet service. Even taking console games into consideration, the most popular have had some aspect of multiplayer (even if it is just four at a time).

If you want story, read a book. If you want entertainment, power up the cable modem! Thank god developers and publishers are finally realizing this. Other than this, excellent magazine, and please keep up the solid work.

Jeff Rohde

Curiously enough, there is probably more user-created single-player content for The Sims than any other game in existence. –ed

I have to take issue with Brett Todd's comment that "Stats show that gamers typically don't touch the multiplayer component of the average title." Now I don't know where he found these magical "stats," but within my circle of about 10 friends we won't even consider purchasing a game unless it supports multiplayer. Now take *Morrowind*, for example. It got great reviews and I thought it looked great, but due to the lack of multiplayer, we never even considered buying it. The only time you'd catch one of us playing a single-player game is if our cable modems blew up.

John M. Zdanowicz

Continuing Kudos

Thank you so much for creating a computer magazine that has a more serious and mature attitude. Why are so many other people also thrilled about this? It's not because a bunch of prudes are reading your magazine. It's because *PC Gamer* and *Computer Gaming World* have taken their immaturity and potty humor to the extreme limits and continue in that direction. I used to enjoy reading those magazines, now I am simply forcing my way through them while waiting for my subscriptions to expire. Your magazine is great reading and I anxiously await the arrival of future editions. If you make the changes to your magazine permanent then you will have a subscriber for life

Billy Weyandt

I like the tone and direction you are taking. I bought an Atari 400 with a membrane keyboard in '81 and have been a gaming fool ever since. As I am approaching the age of 46, the maturity of your magazine is nice. The other two magazines are quite silly at times

David Doss

Q& questions & answers

This month we clear up a couple of oft-used terms and help readers figure out what they need to buy. We can help you with your gaming technical dilemmas too, so fire up that email program and send your queries to *qa@cgonline.com.*

Q: First of all, what is anti-aliasing and anisotropic filtering? How does it affect frame rates in games?

Joon Y.

We throw these terms around as if everyone knows what they are, but those who have been using an older video card until just recently may not have had much exposure to them. A detailed explanation of these two settings would take pages to explain and demonstrate, but the basics are pretty simple.

Anti-aliasing makes the jagged "stair step" edges of 3D graphics go away. There are several methods of doing this, but the basic principle is pretty much the same on modern cards. For every pixel on the screen, the graphics card computes the color for several "sub-pixel" samples—sort of like pixels within a pixel—and then blends the results together to determine the color of the pixel on your screen. So if that pixel lies on an edge between a blue object and a white background, for instance, some of these sub-pixel samples will be blue and some will be white, and the final pixel color will be some shade of light blue. When this is done on all the pixels on the screen, it gives the effect of much smoother edges. The number of sub-pixel samples is a big factor in how well the process works, but the more samples uses, the more it impacts your frame rate. 4X anti aliasing (4XAA), where each pixel uses four sub-pixel samples, is probably the most common and the best tradeoff for quality and speed on high-end video cards. Modern anti-aliasing techniques don't really affect anything but the edges of objects.

Anisotropic filtering is pretty confusing and complicated, but the basic gist of it is that it makes textures look sharper. Textures in 3D games have a tendency to become a bit blurrier if they're at an angle to the camera and further away from the camera. Anisotropic filtering simply works "on top of" standard bilinear or trilinear filtering, reading in more texture information for each pixel and using that to produce sharper, more detailed, more accurate pixels. It really has no effect on close-up objects or objects that face flat towards the camera, but things like the ground stretching far into the distance or a long wall benefit enormously. It's usually measured by the increase in the number of samples over traditional filtering, so "8XAF" would be anisotropic filtering using a maximum of eight times the texture samples than if it was turned off. In many games, anisotropic filtering can have a greater visual impact than anti-aliasing. But only the video cards produced in the last year or so perform it without a pretty severe performance hit.

Settings for AA and AF are usually found by opening your Display Properties settings (where you adjust screen resolution), clicking Advanced, and then browsing through the tabs specific to your video card. GeForce cards have one global setting for all

games, while ATI cards adjust these settings for OpenGL and Direct3D games separately for some reason.

Q: Do you really need an IDE Controller on a computer?

Ram

A: *You do if you want to use IDE devices, like hard drives, CD-ROMs and the like. You could always use SCSI devices instead, but then you need to buy a SCSI controller. If you're asking if you need an extra IDE controller, then the answer is no, not unless you need to add more than four drives or you need some special features it offers. All consumer motherboards have an IDE controller built in, sometimes a SerialATA controller as well.*

Q: You reviewed the FX 5600 Ultra and FX 5200 Ultra in your magazine. I was hoping for information on the benefits of the non-Ultra FX 5600 cards offering 256MB of memory on the board. They are selling for about $75.00 less then the now reduced Radeon 9700 Pro. Will the FX 5600 with 256 MB of memory offer any advantage over the Radeon 9700 Pro with current or Future Games?

Daniel H.

A: *No, the 9700 Pro will be much, much faster than the FX 5600 in just about any current or future game you can imagine. 256MB is mostly a marketing gimmick right now. Almost no game needs that much graphics RAM, and the one or two that does only goes over 128MB when you use really high resolutions plus anti-aliasing. The FX 5600 will be too slow to do that effectively, and in the future when games start to require 256MB graphics cards to run with all the settings cranked up, it will be too slow to handle that as well. This goes for both the Ultra and regular versions. A Radeon 9700 Pro is worth the $75 difference.*

I am a big fan of your direction, namely writing articles and reviews for the adult more than the adolescent. I think you'll find a good steady supply of subscription money from my age group (including me) as well as many adolescents who aren't as shallow as marketing groups make them out to be!

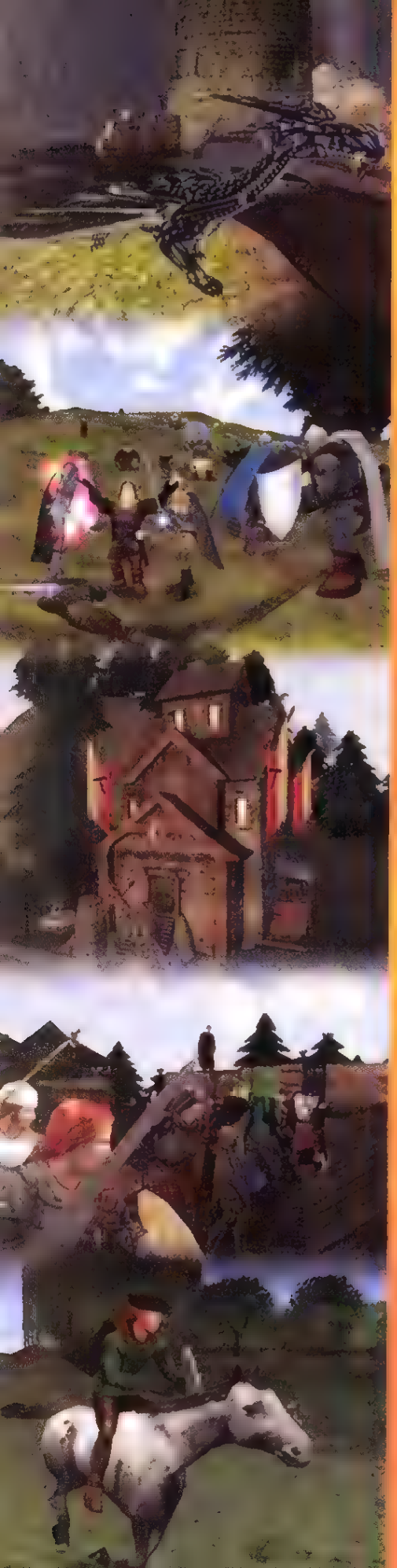
I am seriously going to miss "Inside the Sausage Factory" by Phil Steinmeyer. I work in the consulting industry implementing software package solutions and I've enjoyed a number of parallels between what I do with boring systems and what Phil does with exciting games. It's all hard work at the end of the day!

George Workman

Visit our online forums at *forums.cgonline.com*

Participate in this month's survey at *www.cgonline.com*

ADVERTISERS	Page No
ABS Computer [www.abscomputer.com]	43
Activision [www.activision.com]	14, 61, 63, 65, 67
Atari [www.atari.com]	19
Blizzard [www.blizzard.com]	2-3
Brady Games [www.bradygames.com]	21
Building Your Computer [www.byovision.com]	39, 91
CDV [www.cdv.de]	Back Cover
Chips & Bits [www.chipsbits.com]	37, 43,
Earthlink [www.earthlink.net]	97
Electronic Arts [www.ea.com]	11-13, 16-17
iGames [www.igames.com]	8
Newegg [www.newegg.com]	37
Rockstar [www.rockstargames.com]	6-7
Sony Online [station.sony.com]	Inside Back Cover
Strategy First [www.strategyfirst.com]	29
Vivendi Universal [www.vugames.com]	24-25, 35
Wizards of the Coast [www.wizards.com]	41
World Simulations	31



Camelot
MYTHIC
Camelot

STAKE YOUR CLAIM
dark age of Camelot
IT'S WHAT YOU HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR
Always Evolving. Constantly Growing. An online world that grows richer and more vibrant each day. Dark Age of Camelot quickly became the most critically acclaimed MMORPG of the year and has continued the quest to reign supreme over the lands. Since then, adventurers in our lands have seen the addition of hundreds of new monsters ravaging, scores of new quests to complete, have discovered ways to create magical items and epic new areas, fraught with perils and rewards, to explore. Last winter saw the release of the first expansion pack, Shrouded Isles, revealing three new continents, three new races, six new classes, and a graphic engine that made Dark Age of Camelot the envy of its competitors. Now we're introducing the most robust player housing found in any MMORPG. If you haven't visited our world before, it is time to discover the magic of our Realms; if you are someone whose absence from Camelot has been sorely missed, it is time to come home again, to the challenge, danger and enchantment of the Dark Age of Camelot.
TEEN T
Violence
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
MYTHIC ENTERTAINMENT
www.darkageofcamelot.com
PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE
Copyright © 2003 Mythic Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved. Mythic Entertainment, the Mythic Entertainment logo, "Dark Age of Camelot", the Dark Age of Camelot logo, and stylized Celtic knot are trademarks of Mythic Entertainment, Inc. Abandon Entertainment and the Abandon Entertainment logo are trademarks of Abandon Entertainment, Inc. All other trademarks property of their respective owners.

Some photos courtesy of Michael Caulfield of Wirelmage

Slam Dunk

With an impressive lineup of sequels, remakes, and online games, PC gaming dominates the 2003 Electronic Entertainment Expo

BY STEVE BALMAN

THE GAME INDUSTRY held its annual Electronic Entertainment Expo in Los Angeles on May 14-16. Designed to showcase all of the new games that are coming out for PCs and consoles in the next couple of years, it served as a coming out party for Valve Software's *Half-Life 2*. The developer brought along a 30 minute demo that was so much better than everything else at the show that the standard, "So what have you seen that looks good?" question was modified to, "So what other

than *Half-Life 2* looks good?" Folks, it wasn't even close.

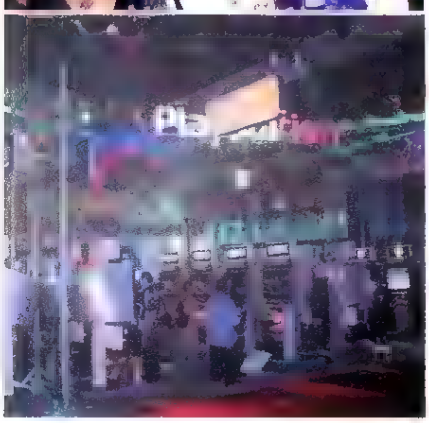
The console world has started to enter the usual slight downward slope that comes toward the end of the machine's cycles, at least it represents a decline from the industry's heady heights of a couple of years ago. The PlayStation 2 in particular featured a relatively safe lineup of predictable sequels, though many of the products shown are able to wring incredible graphics from the aging system, like the new *Prince of Persia* [see page 32] and Electronic Arts' *Need for Speed Underground*. Microsoft's Xbox had several interesting looking games, but its big draw was *Halo 2*, which wowed crowds and lived up to the comment made by Bungie's Jason Jones that it's a lot like the original *Halo*, "only it's *Halo* on fire, going 130 miles per hour through a hospital zone, being chased by helicopters and ninjas, and the ninjas are all on fire, too." Both companies also lowered the prices of their consoles by $20, with Sony announcing it will start bundling the network adapter this year. Finally, it was hard to find people that didn't agree that the Nintendo Gamecube had a very poor showing, with small crowds looking at games like the latest *Mario Kart* and Capcom's wonderfully weird but curiously named *Viewtiful Joe*.

Most in attendance, at least those we spoke with, agreed that PC gaming dominated the show. Besides *Half-Life 2*, it was mostly a show of sequels, and there's coverage of most of the biggies throughout this issue. But there was at least one remake that drew a lot of attention, and that was the announcement of a new version of *Sid Meier's Pirates!*. "It's stood the test of time," said Sid Meier at the press conference announcing the game. "It's time to re-imagine it for the 21st century." Full of open ended "emergent" gameplay before anyone used that term to describe games, it was a true hybrid of role playing, adventure, strategy, and action oriented sword fighting. "We didn't understand [genres] when we made *Pirates!*" said Meier, and he says the new version will remain true to the original, even if it is being "re-imagined" in full 3D.

UbiSoft announced that Sam Fisher will return in *Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*. Though the company hasn't said if it will lead with an Xbox version again, expect a PC version in 2004. According to UbiSoft, "[it] will the be the first stealth game ever to feature multiplayer online missions allowing several players to simultaneously share Sam Fisher's shadowy world of espionage."

Massively multiplayer games continue to dominate the gaming landscape. Atari is entering the fray with *D&D Online*, courtesy of *Asheron's Call* and *Middle Earth Online* developer Turbine. No word yet whether you'll be able to fire a magic missile at the darkness. *Anarchy Online* and *Longest Journey* developer Funcom released a behind closed-doors trailer for its upcoming massively multiplayer "TNBG," as in "The Next Big Thing." (obviously a working title). While they wouldn't confirm this, it appears to be a graveyard-infested horror themed first-person game where one mingles with vampires, werewolves, and the like. After all, the trailer does say "Horror Goes Online."

There's still an incredible amount of activity on the handheld front, from cell phones to cell phone/game machine hybrids like Nokia's N-Gage. But the big announcement was that Sony is launching a Gameboy-killer, the PlayStation Pocket (PSP), in the Fall of 2004. It will feature a new 1.5GB optical disk medium called UMD for software storage. It will play movies and music, and will feature wireless networking. Sony has aggressive plans for the units, and officials were quoted as saying they intend to ship ten million units within its first year.



Another company, Tapwave, announced an interesting device, a PalmOS-based game machine/PDA, code named Helix. Sporting a large hi-res display, analog joystick with four action buttons and two shoulder buttons, and an ATI graphics chip, it runs custom games as well as every PalmOS application. The unit is slick, but the company has a lot of marketing work to raise brand awareness by the time it releases this fall.

Outside of the E3 event itself, Vivendi Universal had a party with Hollywood's own Pussycat Dolls, featuring Carmen Electra, some porn actress danced topless at the NVIDIA party (where Smash Mouth performed a booze-fueled set), and Sony had Foo Fighters and George Clinton.

While many people complain about too many sequels and movie license games—and that's a legitimate concern, considering the quantities of both—it's hard to see if that's a positive or negative sign for the industry as a whole. No one will know with any certainty until the results are tallied, but 2003 should be a banner year for game sales, assuming some of the big titles promised for 2003 actually ship this year (we're looking at you, *Half-Life 2*). Looking back at the show, PC gaming is returning to the forefront of the gaming universe, just like we kept saying it would.

newsbytes

Companies need cash badly—Interplay is on the verge of bankruptcy, and survived only by selling properties to VU Games. The company also secured the rights to make games based on White Wolf's *Exalted* role-playing game. 3DO (*Heroes of Might and Magic*), on the other hand, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy and will be sold in whole or in part. **Nothing says "the future" like Asteroids**—Infogrames officially changed its name to Atari, and the world said, "You're kidding, right?" The company also transferred the rights for a number of games to Firaxis in return for the rights to publish the developer's next titles. Games covered include *Sid Meier's Colonization* and *Sid Meier's Pirates!* **Nuclear war on the web**—GameTable Online launched, providing the ability to play classic board and card games on the web for a fee (www.gametableonline.com).... **EA Has kryptonite**—EA acquired the worldwide rights to make games based on Superman films, comics and animated TV . **All access**—Sony Online Entertainment announced their SOE All Access plan, giving players access to many of their fee-based games (*Star Wars Galaxies* excluded) for $21.99/month. .. **Broadband broadens**—According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, broadband has reached 31% of homes as of March, 2003, compared to 21% the prior year. **Coverman Vick**—EA Sports signed Michael Vick as spokesman for EA's *Madden NFL 2004*.... **THQ publishes radioactive developer**—THQ will publish *S.T.A.L.K.E.R. Oblivion Lost* in 2004. The development team made an actual trip to Chernobyl to get the levels right... **Bionicle autumn**—EA and Lego are working on an action/adventure game based on their toy line *Bionicle*. **Sega Hefts Warhammer**—Sega Europe will publish Warhammer Online in 2004. **Eminem Conspiracy**—Conspiracy Entertainment has the rights and is in the process of making games based on the music and visage of rapper Eminem.... **Magic battlegrounds**—Secret Level is developing *Magic: The Gathering - Battlegrounds* for Atari, a conversion of the collectable card game to action/strategic combat... **Turn-based goes real-time**—Atari and TimeGate Studios are working on *Axis & Allies: RTS*, a real-time strategy game based on the classic board game. *News courtesy of Frictionless Insight (www.frictionlessinsight.com)*

WORLD WAR II

FRONTLINE COMMAND

FULL FRONTAL WAR

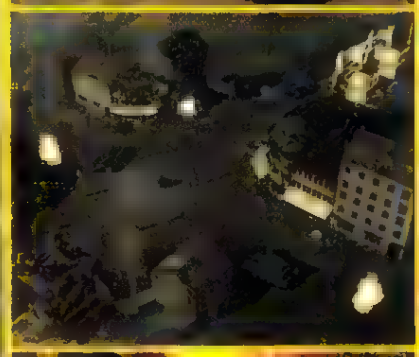
"FRONTLINE COMMAND STANDS HEAD AND SHOULDERS OVER ANY OTHER GAME IN ITS CLASS"
-EUROGAMER-

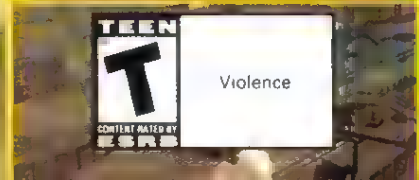
IN STORES NOW!

COMMAND YOUR FORCES AND TURN THE TIDE OF AXIS AGGRESSION WHILE CONQUERING FORTRESS EUROPE USING A VAST AMOUNT OF AUTHENTIC INFANTRY, VEHICLES AND WEAPONRY. • 3D ENGINE ALLOWS FOR ADVANCED TACTICS •TRUE 3D LINE OF SIGHT •"HEARING" SYSTEM WHERE ENEMY UNITS CAN BE HEARD •INTELLIGENT AND ADAPTIVE AI REACTS TO YOUR STRATEGY •ADVANCED "MORALE" SYSTEM WHERE "HEROIC" ACTIONS CAN BE PERFORMED •25 MISSIONS CAN BE PLAYED EITHER AS A 12-MISSION "RECRUIT" CAMPAIGN OR A 20-MISSION, NON-LINEAR "VETERAN" CAMPAIGN

WWW.STRATEGYFIRST.COM

©2003 Strategy First Inc. All rights reserved. World War II: Frontline Command is a trademark of The Bitmap Brothers. All rights reserved. All other trademarks and copyrights are the properties of their respective owners





[left to right] Play Spider-Man with Insect Invasion for Impossible Creatures; Soldat combines Worms with Unreal Tournament; Gui Bedos' 1-on-1 Ilarnek map ownz CliffyB.

Insects Invade Impossible Creatures

Relic Entertainment and Microsoft aren't giving up the gorilla with Impossible Creatures. Although the do-it-yourself strategy game hasn't been the sales-chart monster that the developer and producer were counting on, a free expansion pack should be available by the time you're able to read these words in shiny magazine form. *Insect Invasion* will add about 15 creepy crawlies to the existing pool of furry and fishy beasts available for genetic manipulation. A complete bug list (which for once is a good thing for a computer game) is being held back until the official release date, although it is known that the pack will feature the Black Widow, Bombardier Beetle, Stinkbug, Walking Stick, and Termite. Black Widow Wolves, anyone? The menagerie will also come with nine new abilities. New environments and multiplayer maps are being promised as well, along with game enhancements said to provide more tactical and strategic options. In related news, Relic is planning to release an SDK for Impossible Creatures, along with updated tools and a packager to ease distribution hassles with homebrewed scenarios. Modders can look for it online at the same time as Insect Invasion.

Let CliffyB Guide the Way

Unreal Tournament 2003 fraggers can now let the game's lead designer do the dirty work of hunting down the shooter's best maps. CliffyB's Ownage 2.0 web site comes courtesy of Cliff Bleszinski himself, who got sick of having to troll the web for the best and brightest maps from the modding community. It's updated frequently and even features its own award in the coveted "Glowing Zero." Recent top maps at Ownage 2.0 include Gui Bedos' future gothic 1-on-1 Ilarnek, Emanuel Da Roit's almost medieval AlpsDawnDuel, and Magnus Olin's gloomy Raw. GameSpy FilePlanet also hosts the 105MB Ownage Compilation Pack, featuring the first top 20 Ownage maps.

That's "Soldier" to You

It may not be pretty, but *Soldat* is one of the more innovative games to come out of the online shareware scene in some time. The multiplayer shooter is billed by Polish creator Michal Marcinkowski as a side-view agglomeration of *Worms*, *Quake*, and *Unreal Tournament* with "tons of blood and flesh." Yum. Gameplay consists of the usual slaughter-everybody all-the-time stuff, although there's an attention to depth here that you don't often see in homegrown games this side of *Day of Defeat*. Real-world physics govern the environments, real-life weapons such as the MP5 and AK47 are used to do the killing, and intelligent bots can be used as opposition in the six multiplayer game modes. Such a dog's breakfast of influences has helped the game earn a cult following, despite a graphic engine that only a mother could love and a $9.95 registration fee.

Except for One Tiny Village...

Mods for *Medieval: Total War* ensure that you don't need to buy the retail *Viking Invasion* expansion pack to get more mace-wielding mayhem. One of the very best is King David's Patrician total conversion. This lengthy campaign moves the setting back to 390 B.C., when the plucky Gauls were battling Rome for control of Western Europe. Asterix and Obelix are nowhere in sight, but in addition to the warring Gauls and Romans, more than a dozen additional factions have been included for your conquering pleasure. You get to say hello to the Samnites, Etruscans, Macedonians, and Carthginians, amongst others. Version 1.2 is online now at Respawn UK. Total War series fans can find an extensive library of user-designed campaigns and battles, involving both historical and "What if?" scenarios, at Totalwar.org.

You Really from Mars, Bub?

X2 got you all revved up for some comic book gaming? Then install *Freedom Force* and download The Great Hunt, a four mission series from ShodoeSword where Kang the Conqueror leads a multi-dimensional force of baddies on a search for an artifact in Patriot City. HeroClix table-toppers with no problem blending the Marvel and DC universes should be right at home here, as the lineup includes long underwear types from both the authentic comic book franchises and the, um, fictional one from the *Freedom Force* setting. So if you've ever wanted to pair up Wolverine with Martian Manhunter and Thor with Minute Man, now's your chance. *—Brett Todd*

Links

CliffyB's Ownage 2.0 www.planetunreal.com/cliffyb

FreedomMods (The Great Hunt) www.freedommods.com

GameSpy FilePlanet Ownage Compilation #1

www.fileplanet.com/files/120000/121887.shtm

Impossible Creatures Insect Invasion (Official Site)

www.microsoft.com/games/impossiblecreatures/insectinvasion.asp

Respawn UK (Patrician for Medieval: Total War) www.respawn.co.uk

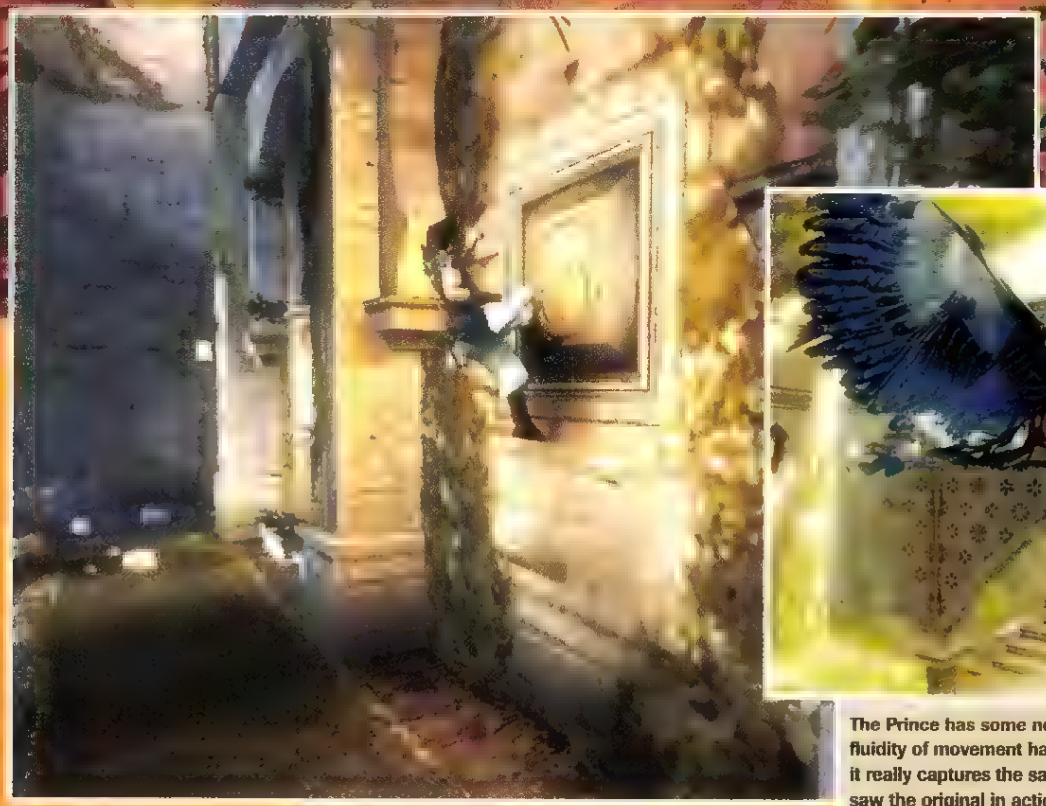
Soldat (Official Site) www.soldat.prv.pl

Total War.org www.totalwar.org

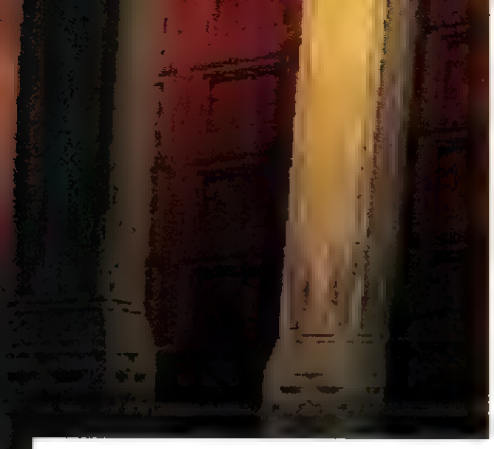
INBOUND

Multiplayer Online Strategic Simulations

Free Play • WorldSims.com



The Prince has some new moves in Sands of Time. The fluidity of movement has to be seen to be appreciated; it really captures the same feeling you got when you saw the original in action for the first time.



The Prince can now walk on walls and play around with time.

Grace Under Pressure

Move over, Barishnikov, it's a new level of acrobatic grace with ***Prince of Persia: Sands of Time***

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER UbiSoft • RELEASE DATE Winter 2003

BY TOM CHICK

READING THIS PREVIEW won't be enough. Seriously. Particularly since you might have been burned by *Prince of Persia 3D*, the lame *Tomb Raider* rip-off that tried to cash in on the nostalgia of thirtysomethings who remembered playing Jordan Mechner's classic 2D adventures on their Apple IIs. To fully appreciate what UbiSoft is doing with *Prince of Persia Sands of Time*, you're going to have to see it in action. You're going to have to see the prince dance around like a wire-fu monkey in a low-G environment, half *Matrix*, half *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, all fluid grace.

Creative director Patrice Desilets explains how the animation is created by hand and immediately integrated into the gameplay for testing. He talks about how the animators work with the AI programmers and the level designers. He says their engine breaks every animation into components that can be shuffled and intercut with other animations. He uses fancy words like "inverse kinematics." But it's still not enough to convey the sense of freedom in the way you move the prince and how he interacts with the environments. It's one of those uniquely gratifying games in which you can easily do things that look complicated and amazing.

Sands of Time is being developed in Montreal by the same studio responsible for *Splinter Cell*. After securing the *Prince of Persia* rights, UbiSoft brought Mechner in as a creative consultant, working from his home in Los Angeles. But as he got more involved, his role expanded. He's currently living in Montreal to work directly with the team as they finish up the game.

Mechner says an important point of continuity with the original games is "the sheer exhilaration of movement, the feeling that you are one with the animated character on the screen, that you are not just going through mechanical motions to complete the level, but that you're flying," he says, "a feeling of joy in your own acrobatic grace."

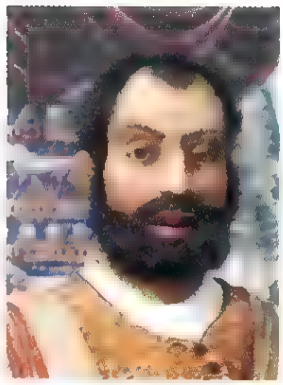
The *Sands of Time* subtitle refers to an important gameplay mechanic. The backstory is something about magical sand that breaks out of an hourglass and turns everyone into a monster. By fighting these monsters, the prince gathers sand. He can then use it to manipulate time. One of the time manipulations is the ability to rewind the game several seconds. This lets you recover from *Prince of Persia's* trademark traps as well as giving you extra chances at difficult maneuvers like tricky jumps, all without having to resort to the tired stutter of saving and reloading. By being able to rewind time, you get all the satisfaction of seeing the prince brutally skewered, with none of the frustration.

The sand also allows a bullet-time slow motion, stopped time to freeze enemies, and accelerated time to move quickly. As you gather sand, you can unlock future visions, which are cutscenes that show you the solutions to puzzles and traps with a flash of fancy camerawork. But *Sands of Time* is full of impressive cinematic tricks even beyond these future visions. There are smash pans, cuts, and zooms designed to show the level layout and display the prince's antics without getting in the way of situational awareness. As the prince progresses through the castle where the game is set, there's an overview perspective to give you a sense of where you're going and where you've come from. Again, reading this preview won't be enough; like the animation, it's really something you have to see to appreciate.

You might be dismayed that this is as a cross-platform game with the Playstation 2 as the base hardware level. But again, you have to see it to appreciate how good it looks. It's hard to believe the PS2 is capable of this much detail and animation, this far a viewing distance, and this vivid a lighting model. UbiSoft won't discuss any of the changes that might occur when the game is ported over to the PC a few months after the console release, but it's safe to assume higher resolution graphics and perhaps even more detailed textures. Right now the combat system is a streamlined interface built around a dual analog joystick gamepad; one stick controls direction of movement, the other controls the direction of attack. "It is a bit early to discuss controls for the PC version," says Desilets, "but the fight system remains an element very important for this game ..there are definitely plans to adapt this style of interface for thePC."

Civilization III: Conquests

DEVELOPER Firaxis • PUBLISHER Atari
RELEASE DATE Fall 2003



Members of the Sengoku civilization pictured on the map below will be able to learn the mystical art of Ninjutsu.

UPON SEEING A feature list for *Civilization III: Conquests*, your first thought might be, "Hey, these are just a bunch of scenarios!" In a way, that's true. There will be some minor interface changes, some new civilizations, new government types such as Islamic Sultanates and Confucian Bureaucracies, and a brand new wonder or two, including the Statue of Zeus. The maps can now undergo permanent changes from things like random volcanoes and battle damage. Firaxis also plans to improve the multiplayer support, including streamlining the game's play-by-email support and offering many editor enhancements.

But the bulk of this expansion pack is devoted to the scenarios, called conquests. There will be eight new civilizations, each with its own leader, unique units, and special abilities, and all of the conquests are based on historical real-world events. Although there'll be a flashy custom cosmetic treatment for the units, technologies, and wonders, the changes go deeper than just the graphics. Firaxis is building conquests around specific elements of gameplay, some of which are entirely new, requiring changes to the code base that can't be accomplished with the scenario editor.

For instance, a Shogun-themed conquest with a regicide goal (kill the opponent's king to win) will have a special tech tree. As the player researches new techs, his king will become more powerful, advancing from a lowly 2/2/1 all the way to a godly 11/11/4. But even then, kings can be vulnerable outside of battle. There will be a separate branch of tech for ninja units that can develop unique abilities, including assassination by directing a special attack at a king, bypassing any defensive units stacked with the king.

Another example is the Aztec-themed scenario, which will have special means of gathering resources unique to Civ games; and also included are the Mayan civilization, and the Sumarians with their Enkidu Warriors.

Firaxis says a lot of the ideas behind the conquests were based on fan requests. Which is probably why there's finally an official full-blown World War II scenario, something in the previous *Civilizations* that many players missed in *Civilization III*. The basic design for the conquests is already done, and Firaxis will be banging on the scenarios, balancing them and testing them between now the expansion's planned fall release. —*Tom Chick*

Battlecruiser Generations

DEVELOPER 3000AD
PUBLISHER Dreamcatcher Interactive
RELEASE DATE Summer 2003

IF YOU VISIT the website for *Battlecruiser Generations* website, you'll see that it's a "Derek Smart simulation." If you know much about Derek Smart, you'd know that there's no way to simulate him, but the obvious leap shows that it's the homepage for Smart's latest offering in his long-lived endeavor to create the very best *Battlecruiser* game ever.

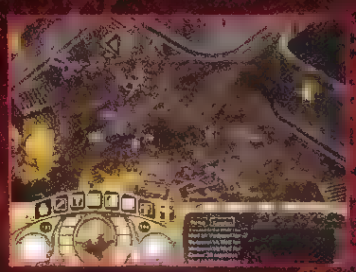
Generations (supposedly the last sim in the franchise) is the sequel to *Battlecruiser Millenium*, with nearly 20 brand new features including support for DirectX 9, multiplayer, and a planetary graphics overhaul that at least makes it look like the best *Battlecruiser* game ever. Smart's simulations are notorious for their incredibly detailed (and yes, demanding) gameworlds, but honestly, this is one colossal monster of a game. In a nutshell, you buy a ship, complete missions to obtain assets, and expand your command to amass an enormous staff, a vehicle fleet of-many-faces, multiple space stations, and more. And this takes place over, not one, but two entire galaxies. Big galaxies. Huge.

As Smart demonstrates the game, his excitement grows to a feverish pitch as he so obviously and thoroughly enjoys his brainchild. "Wait! Wait! You're not gonna

YOUR ANCESTRY HAS MADE YOU A WARRIOR. YOUR FATE WILL MAKE YOU A CHAMPION.

Somewhere between fantasy and history, your epic crusade begins in a medieval world ravaged by monster spirits and demonic magic. As a descendant of King Richard the Lionhearted, it will take all of your wit, wisdom and will to save the fate of humankind.

• Create characters from four unique races.



• Master over 80 spells and thousands of weapons.

• Battle individually or in teams.

lionheart.blackisle.com

TEEN T
BLOOD
SUGGESTIVE THEMES
USE OF ALCOHOL
VIOLENCE
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

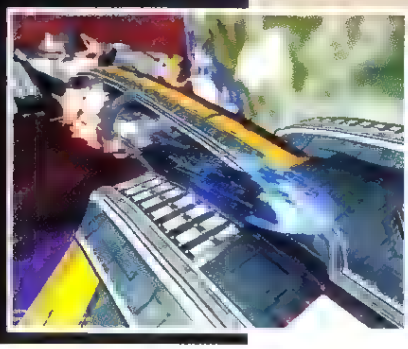
BLACK ISLE

POWERED BY gamespy

Interplay

Reflexive

LIONHEART: Legacy of the Crusader © 2003 Interplay Entertainment Corp. All Rights Reserved. Reflexive Velocity Engine © 2003 Reflexive Entertainment, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Interplay, the Interplay logo, Black Isle Studios, the Black Isle Studios Logo, Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader, and the Lionheart: Legacy of the Crusader logo are trademarks of Interplay Entertainment Corp. Reflexive and the Reflexive logo are trademarks of Reflexive Entertainment, Inc. The Vivendi Universal Games Logo is a trademark of Vivendi Universal Games, Inc. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks and copyrights are the property of their respective owners.



BATTLECRUISER: [left to right] This space station's dimensions are 3797.38m (H) x 14405.44m (L). ...but the tiny, circling fighters still continuously mount an attack on its shields; The game uses "Per poly" collision detection for the utmost accuracy. Here the shield fx cone in the front is positional, and detects the poly that is hit. The shield fx is then drawn to highlight the direction of the hit.

believe this!" he exclaims as he furiously opens, utilizes, closes, and switches between innumerable overlapping windows while staging a planetary coup. "OKay. There's those guys. And they're gonna land ..*Now*! And here's my guy. He's on top of the ship. And *look* at the size of that ship!" Smart is mesmerized, as onlookers gawk in disbelief as to how much concentration it takes to master the intricacies of this particular foray into intergalactic combat. "Sure, it's a niche product," says Smart, who has had a band of loyal stalwart devotees to the *Battlecruiser* series since the get go. "But it's what I do."

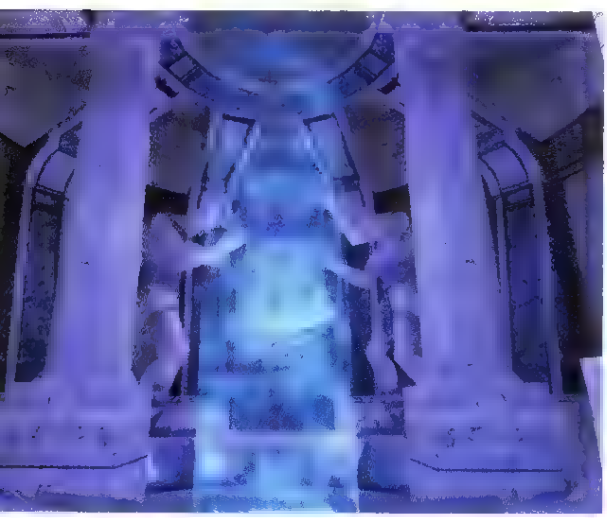
Next on his agenda is *Battlecruiser Online*, a massively-multiplayer game. "But I'm not doing that for money," says Smart, "Just as a steady income to fund what I really want to do." And it's pretty scary to speculate what that might be. *–Cindy Yans*

Dark Age of Camelot: Trials of Atlantis

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER Mythic Entertainment • RELEASE DATE Winter

DARK AGE OF CAMELOT subscribers have a lot to look to forward to this year. First, there are two free downloadable summer expansions, *Foundations* (which revolves around storage space and its beautification, AKA real estate) and another that hopes to enhance the realm vs. realm combat mechanism that served as the franchise's initial hook. But the most substantial add-on to date will be *Trials of Atlantis*. It will feature nearly thirty new zones, many of them submerged under water that require water-breathing magic to navigate, while boats and hammerhead sharks provide alternatives to swimming and drowning. Although Mythic only demonstrated a few areas in the game, the lines of rage etched into the faces of glowering tritons and richly textured pre-Greco-Roman columns festooned with algae, all rendered in NDL's Gamebryo graphics engine, suggest more fabled antiquity and sense of place than any *Camelot* content to date.

There's also the matter of The Nine Trials—epic quests that will require massive multiplayer cooperation on the same scale as castle storming to complete (or to put it another way, expect your aquatic boss opponents to be castle-sized). Your rewards are master levels that grant boons to your skills and stats, in addition to the usual rare, glittering items, and the first-ever chance to achieve player vs. player glory in an underwater setting. *Trials of Atlantis* will also add a new race to each of the three *Camelot* realms, although Mythic wasn't saying whether or not these will be Atlantean-themed. If they are, though, in keeping with the real estate themes espoused in *Foundations*, you'll be able to own and lease out square lots of undersea kelp beds. Or not. *-Kelly Wand*



DARK AGE OF CAMELOT: The lost city is very... blue; If there were mermen in Diablo II, this would have been one of them.

NewEgg.com -- Online Computer Parts, Peripherals, Components, and Accessories-Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Search Favorites History

Address http://www.newegg.com/

4 Million+ Unique Visitors Per Month | RMA REQUEST | RMA STATUS | ACCOUNT UPDATE | WISH LIST | ORDER STATUS

new egg.com

ALL PRODUCTS | COMPUTER HARDWARE | SOFTWARE | MAC STORE | DIGITAL CAMERA | NETWORK | ELECTRONICS & ACCESSORIES | CELLULAR PHONE | GENERIC PRODUCTS | REFURBISHED ITEMS | ?HELP

| SHOP BY CATEGORY | SHOP BY BRAND | TOP 10 SELLERS | NEW PRODUCTS | SPECIAL SALES | REBATE SALES |

SEARCH Description (Detail View) (Enter Find It Code™ Here) go ADVANCED SEARCH

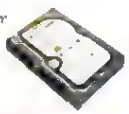
Find It Code™

Best Value, Always!

Crucial Micron 512MB 64x64 PC 2700 DDR RAM - OEM

$67.00

Western Digital Raptor 36GB SATA WD360GD 10,000RPM 8MB Hard Drive - OEM



$143.00

AMD Athlon XP 2500+ Barton 333MHz FSB 512K Processor - Retail

$96.00

Asus A7N8X Deluxe Socket A nForce2 USB 2.0 SATA Motherboard for AMD XP/Duron Processors - Retail

$126.99

NEC Model# LCD1760V-BK MultiSync 17" LCD Monitor - Retail

$429.00

Kingston HyperX Series 512MB PC2700 64x64 DDR RAM - Retail

$75.50

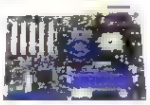
Maxtor 120GB 7200RPM Hard Drive 8MB Cache - OEM

$115.00

Intel Pentium 4 2.4CGHz 512K Socket 478 Hyper Threading Technology 800MHz FSB - Retail

$185.00

ABIT IC7-G Intel 875P chipset for Socket 478 800MHz Canterwood ATX Motherboard - Retail



$217.00

Viewsonic Model# E70F+SB 17" Perfect Flat CRT Monitor - Retail

$139.00

XFX GeForce 4 Ti4200 8X AGP 128MB DVI VIVO Video-in/out - Retail

$124.00

NEC Model# DRW NE 0ND1100A DVD-R/RW Recorder Drive - OEM

$165.00

Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 - OEM

$78.00

Microsoft Natural PS2 Keyboard Elite - OEM

$22.00

Antec Life Style Series Sonata Piano Black w/ 380 Watt Power Supply - Retail

$119.99

ATI Radeon 9600 PRO 128MB 8X AGP DVI/TV-out Dual Monitor - Retail

$182.00

Lite On Model# LTR-52246 52x24x52 Black CD-RW Drive - OEM

$51.00

Logitech Z-680 5.1 Metallic Silver Speaker 500 Watt THX Certified w/ Dolby Digital - Retail

$275.00

Logitech B69 Corded Optical Mouse - OEM

$17.00

Chieftec Aluminum Workstation Tower w/ Plastic Front Cover USB 2.0 450 Watt Power Supply - OEM

$89.00

Panasonic DVD-RP91N Progressive Scan DVD RAM Player - Retail

$289.99

Half Life Platinum Edition 2 - PC Game Retail

$20.99

Canon i950 Photo Printer - Retail

$235.00

Canon CanoScan Model# D1250U2F USB Flatbed Scanner - Retail

$96.00

Shuttle XPC SK41G Socket A Barebone PC Flex ATX w/ Heat Pipe Technology - Retail

$225.00

Nikon Coolpix 5700 5.0MP Digital Camera - Retail

$909.00

Olympus Digital Camera C-4000 Zoom - Retail

$389.00

Dane-Elec 128MB Compact Flash Memory Card - Retail

$27.00

Samsung 128MB Smart Media Card - OEM

$27.50

Sandisk 256MB Secure Digital Memory Card - Retail

$72.00

98%

3,800+

40,000+ of product

9.82 10 Rating from 4,500+ Reviews on Resellerratings.com

Bizrate.com Certified Merchant with 98% Satisfactory Rating from 25,000+

Copyright 2003 NewEgg.com All rights reserved. All prices and specifications are subject to change without notice. NewEgg.com is not responsible for typographical errors. All typographical errors are subject to correction.

[clockwise from left] Private realms will allow for really dramatic bosses; Some spells have more knockback than others; Your appearance will change based on the mortal race that worships you.

Mythica

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER Microsoft

RELEASE DATE 2004

HOW ARE YOU going to make your massively multiplayer online game stand out from your established competitors, not to mention the few dozen in development? It's the first and hardest question any developer has to answer. The producer of Microsoft's *Mythica*, Matt Wilson, has an answer: "Our primary focus was to make the players feel special, not just one of a thousand. The single player role-playing games make you feel like a hero. In the massively multiplayer space, you get lost with all the other people and feel like one of thousands. In [*Mythica*], you will get adventures that you usually only see in single-player games, where the world is complex, dynamic, and reactive to the players. It will be custom to you. It's your group's own private space. No waiting, no camping, and the monsters are always there."

These private realms are separate areas featuring scripted adventures. Some of them will be traditional dungeon crawls with boss battles at the end, but there will also be unique types of private realms called playscapes. Playscapes are complex freeform areas with NPCs going about their lives and maybe even enemy forces working to accomplish their own goals. Each one is spawned and maintained separately for a group of characters. Playscapes can grow and change. They can thrive or be destroyed.

"Depending on what you decide to do and what goals you decide to achieve, different things will occur," Wilson says. "They're more than just one-shot dungeons. To attract players back, there are going to be goals that are extremely hard to achieve and goals that are fairly simple. So, similar to a single-player game, you might go in and achieve the first couple levels of goals. As you progress in the game, you might have to go back to that playscape and achieve goals that might be a little more difficult."

The basic conceit behind *Mythica* is that you're a dead Norse warrior called to help the gods. They give you immortality and send you back to work among the mortals. Your choice of patron god will determine the skill tree you use when you advance. Lead designer Joel Manners says each tree has several non-combat skills. "We're taking great pains to ensure that other forms of role playing are viable, like stealth, deception, crafting, controlling, and supporting." Manners says the private realms play a big part in this. "We can reward players for accomplishing all sorts of goals that have nothing to do with killing."

The world of *Mythica* will feature humans as well as the Norse equivalent of dwarves and elves. These races figure into the character advancement system. "Your deeds gain you worshipers amongst the mortals," Manners says. "What deeds you perform dictates which mortals love you and which mortals fear you. As more and more mortals worship you, your power grows." Not only will you change to resemble the race that worships you most, but you'll gain unique abilities. There's also a fame system.

"As the player does more and more for the mortals of an area," Manners says, "they recognize that player more and more as their god. We use this fame in many ways, but primarily we want it to be rewarding to the player. Mortals will build shrines and temples to that character, raising statues and making sacrifices to the immortal. Mortals might be so overwhelmed by the physical presence of their god that they spontaneously convert to being followers of the immortal, fighting at his side and singing his praises."

"All of a sudden you have a little village full of your worshippers somewhere in the world. You love the way they flock to you and bow low, you like the nice new statue of yourself they have erected in the village

square, and you like bringing your friends out to see it. A lot of this fame is represented at first in the private realms, but as word spreads it will leak out into the public world as well. That's when you know you're in the big leagues. When the Alfar King raises your banner in his main hall, then you know you've really arrived."

If Microsoft can bring this sort of gratifying single player sensibility to massively multiplayer game, the Alfar King is going to need a lot of banners. *Tom Chick*

[from top] Raythe is undead—but don't tell her that; Chain lightning devastates the Fade.

Exarch

DEVELOPER Realm Interactive

PUBLISHER NCSoft • RELEASE DATE 2004

BILLING ITSELF AS the place "where the world comes to play," NCSoft seems to have become the self appointed patron saint of massively multiplayer online role playing games. It began with *Lineage*—a gaming way-of-life for millions in Korea—and didn't stop until it had a whopping collective of nine pretty strong contenders (at least that we know of) under its belt.

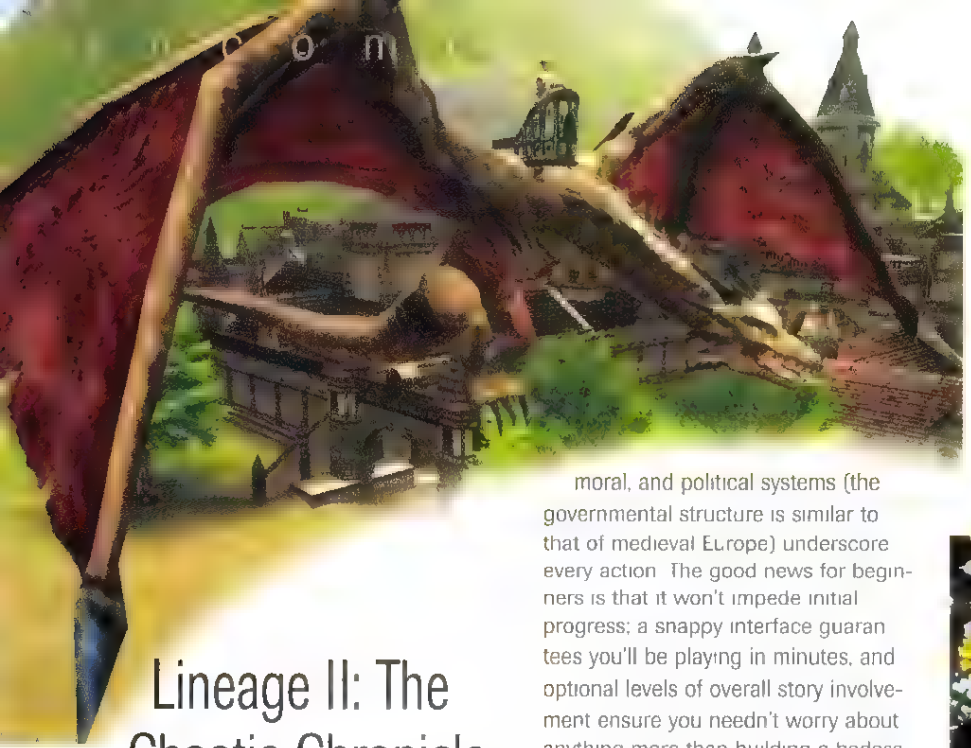
While many have described *Exarch* as a *Diablo II* MMO, it's hard to justify leaving it at that. While not really similar to the *Might and Magic* games or *Arcanum*, it does use the same technique of blending incongruent themes. Here, you'll see a futuristic post-apocalyptic RPG that melds all the classic sci-fi elements such as starships, blasters, power-armor, and aliens, with the usual medieval fantasy fare like swords, spellcraft, mystical artifacts, etc., with four playable races, three classes per race, cooperative gameplay with just a touch of player-versus-player combat, and public and private quest areas (*la mode* these days). Mostly though, it's all about combat.

"There's kind of a dark brooding feel throughout everything, which is a perfect atmosphere for this game," says NCSoft Lead Tester Randy Pratt. "It permeates the character choice, as well as other stuff, and they're very different choices from your standard fighter magic user-thief." And dark it is, but thanks to the genius of comic book artist Joe Madureira (*X-Men* and *Battle Chasers*), it's a delicious form of darkness, with some of the most bizarre monstrosities you're likely to see.

"There are lots of unusual critters," says Pratt, "especially the Freaky Mutant Area. When you get in there, it's just stranger and stranger stuff." And he isn't kidding. In addition to the run of the mill gnomes, liches, and wraiths there's a Conjoined-Twin Creature—half smart, half stupid, with the smart half able to wield the stupid half as an attack weapon. There are orc tree-huggers with moose antlers, "Uni-Psychos" that roll around on a single bladed wheel and do spinning attacks, Puke Mutants (don't ask), a boss called The Widower (perhaps self-made?), and more—all portrayed in a deliciously wicked comedic fashion.

Emulating *Diablo* is certainly not a bad thing, although many have tried, with limited success. *Exarch* could rise to the top of the heap for NCSoft (unless *Tabula Rosa*, the well-kept secret of Richard "Lord British" Garriott and company, has anything to say about it). *Cindy Yans*

GOT SPEED?
[www.bycvision.com]
Vision Gamer Inversion
AMD Athlon® XP 3200+ Processor
ASUS® A7N8X Deluxe nForce2 Motherboard
ASUS® GeForce FX5200 128MB
Kingston® HyperX PC3000 DDR Memory
Zalman 3100+ Performance CPU Cooling
Vision Full Tower Case w/Window
Enermax 350 Watt Whisper Power Supply
Western Digital® 7,200 rpm, 8MB Buffer HDD
Lite-On 16x DVDROM Drive
Lite-On 52x24x52x CDRW Drive
SoundBlaster® Audigy™ w/1394 Sound Card
Logitech® Keyboard and Optical Mouse
Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
Meticulously Hand Assembled
12 Month Subscription to Computer Games Magazine
1 Year 24/7 Technical Support and On-Site Support
Serious Gaming
From around $1,699
Full Line of Parts and Accessories Now Available
cables • case fans • neon • cases • cpu coolers
external drive enclosures • usb peripherals
keyboards/mice • monitors • multi-function front panels • power supplies • removeable drive enclosures • software • speakers • video cards and more!
GET FREE* SHIPPING WHEN YOU ORDER ONLINE
www.bycVISION.com
OR
ORDER TOLL FREE 800.326.9994
Building Your Computer LLC



Lineage II: The Chaotic Chronicle

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER NCSoft
RELEASE DATE Fall 2003

DESPITE RECORD-BREAKING success in Korea and Lord British's wholehearted endorsement, the original *Lineage* barely made a ripple in the collective consciousness with its American launch. Dated visuals, similarly archaic gameplay, and general disinterest were all factors in the title's failing as a domestic massively multiplayer online success story. Its creators are cooking up a prequel that practically demands your lazy Mom n' apple pie-loving ass finally sit up and take notice.

Observe the visual makeover. *Unreal* technology has breathed new life into the world of Aden, even if the current story takes place 150 years before its predecessor. Skies darken, flowers bloom, elf maidens strain at their bustiers and monstrous hordes scramble forth in magnificent menace. The five races from whom you can choose are split into two classes, wizard and warrior, and look easily lifelike.

Bear in mind though, that while set in a picturesque realm of dynamic light sources, flickering shadows, and atmospheric environs, brains are stressed over beauty. Complex economic, moral, and political systems (the governmental structure is similar to that of medieval Europe) underscore every action. The good news for beginners is that it won't impede initial progress; a snappy interface guarantees you'll be playing in minutes, and optional levels of overall story involvement ensure you needn't worry about anything more than building a badass avatar if so desired.

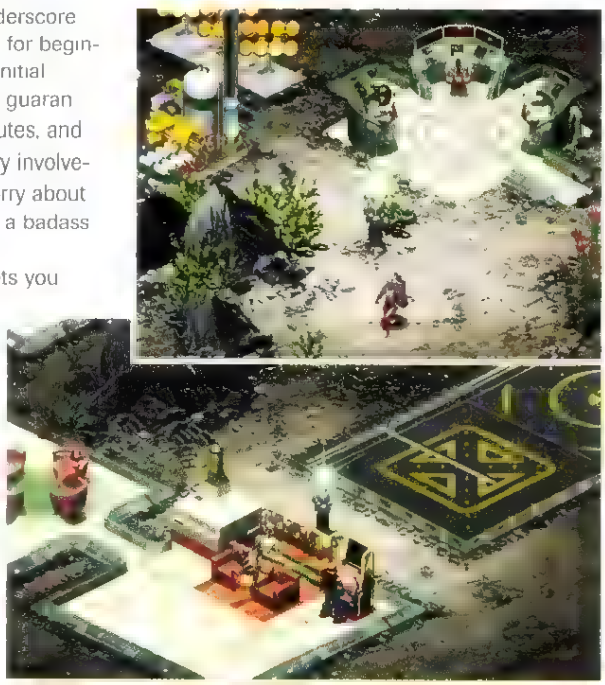
Besides, any game that lets you nurture, raise, train, and then fly a dragon scores a number of bonus points. It's just one of many new features the product adds to an already sound framework. It's possible that consumer apathy may once again strike, leaving the title dead in its tracks; however, unlike the last time, it appears to have a much better chance of success. —*Scott Steinberg*

[top left] LINEAGE: Tread with caution—hell hath no fury like a female dragonrider scorned. [above] Thanks to hyper-detailed visuals, you can see the chinks in its chitinous armor.

Space Colony

DEVELOPER Firefly Studios
PUBLISHER Gathering
RELEASE DATE Fall 2003

THE BASIC PITCH is this: "It's like *The Sims*, but in outer space." The more advanced pitch for strategy gamers who might recognize the developers at Firefly for their *Stronghold* games is this: "It's like a sci-fi *Stronghold* with sims as part of the resource model."



[upper] SPACE COLONY: Power and light keep the garden flourishing. [lower] Lounges and casinos will promote tourism, but too much of it will stress-out the locals.

As with *Stronghold*, you gather raw materials and process them into finished goods that are sold for money or put to use to further developer your castle. Only this time, it's not a castle but a space colony, with features like a xenomorph zoo and a low-G golf course. There's an element of *Tropico* in how you can lure tourists to your colony and bilk them for money. There's even a bit of *Stronghold's* siege mentality; if you choose the combat branch in the campaign, you'll have to use robot commandos, laser turrets, and other weapons to hold back waves of attacking aliens.

The Sims element comes from the personnel who live on your colony and operate the economy. The happier they are, the

www.chipsbits.com

LESS COST, MORE FUN.

Half-Life 2

Vivendi Universal Games

$44.95

By taking the suspense, challenge and visceral charge of the original, and adding startling new realism and responsiveness, Half-Life 2 opens the door to a world where the player's presence affects everything around him, from the physical environment to the behaviors ? even the emotions ? of both friends and enemies. The player again picks up the crowbar of research scientist Gordon Freeman, who finds himself on an alien-infested Earth being picked to the bone, its resources depleted, its populace dwindling. Freeman is thrust into the unenviable role of rescuing the world from the wrong he unleashed back at Black Mesa. And a lot of people ? people he cares about ? are counting on him.

Half-Life 2— Get it at CHIPS & BITS

PO Box 234 • Dept. 11410 • 2520 VT Rte. 100N • Rochester, VT 05767

INT'L 802.767.3033 • FAX 802.767.3382 • US 800.699.GAME (4263)

Source Code 11418

more efficiently they'll do their jobs. *Space Colony* features a cast of 20 characters, each with unique preferences, social interactions, and sound bites. Although there are a few sims-style bars representing the basics of health, hunger, and hygiene, there's a lot more going on under the hood. Do they want a loud cantina or a quiet computer library? Do they want a gravity free dance floor or a therapy robot? You have to figure out how to make these guys happy. Then you have to keep them that way over the course of the ongoing campaign, which tracks their development.

Space Colony is affecting a whimsical sense of humor, but underneath it all, Firefly is still trying to create a serious builder with a focus on people who just happen to be out of the world. —*Tom Chick*

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth

DEVELOPER Headfirst Studios
PUBLISHER Bethesda Softworks
RELEASE DATE 2004

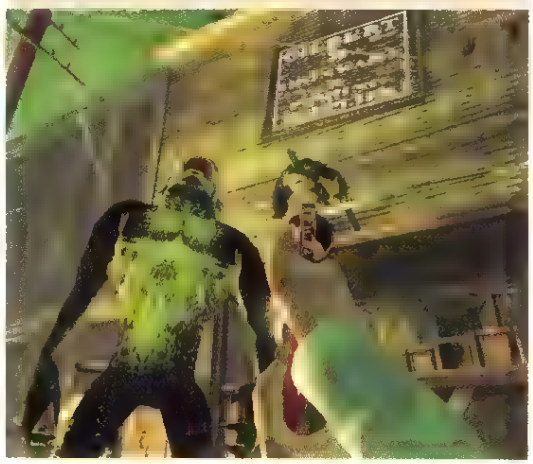
ALTHOUGH THE MYTHOS of H.P. Lovecraft did make it from paperbound to tabletop in Chaosium's pen and paper *Cthulhu* universe, it's difficult to imagine a full-blown graphical treatment of his works. This is mainly because Lovecraft's brand of horror lies just below the surface where the unseen provides most of the tension.

Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of the Earth is not based on any particular work, but is an original story that encompasses many elements and creatures from Lovecraft's world. It's 1920 and you play Jack Carter, a bespectacled, angst-ridden cop whose stint in an insane asylum has done little for his credibility in tales of cultists and grisly eviscerations. The town of Innsmouth, which should be familiar to Lovecraft fans, is darker than he remembers, and as he investigates, he descends into an even darker place of madness and fear.

You proceed in first-person mode, and see your hands in front of you as you manipulate objects, rather like controlling the right arm of the heroine in the old *Trespasser* game. Dexterity is part of the deal, but it won't be fine-tuned enough to make you crazy. The story itself tries hard enough do that. Special effects are very striking, from viewing the action as rain (or blood) splashes on your glasses, to experiencing psychotic episodes during which you have a hard time handling a weapon, or become dizzy, or hear strange sounds that may or may not be there. Headfirst Studios' "Insanity System" has upwards of 15 random effects that kick in if you are unable to cope with what's going on around you. One of the most interesting aspects of gameplay is that your health, stamina and level of sanity are tracked "in the background." You'll be able to tell the status of these elements by what you're *experiencing* in the game, rather than by checking a health bar. As you solve more puzzles and gain more information, it's easier to keep your mind from shattering completely.

The guys at Headfirst have been working on this product for quite some time, and they and Bethesda are taking some unusual risks here, but if they even come close to a brink of-insanity simulation that would have made Lovecraft proud, it'll be a coup for them, and a gripping experience for niche Cthulu fans everywhere. —*Cindy Yans*

[above] A cultist bites the dust. [inset] You'll control your hands in first person, with weapons as well as with activities like lockpicking. [below] "As the Deep Ones attack."



Look Inside

building the best systems since 1990

What is considered to be a great gaming computer?

Is it its cool case?

Is it its sleek speakers?

Well . that would be good

But to be **GREAT**, it's what is **inside that counts!**

Q [illegible]

A: "ABS's overall 'Out of the Box' customer experience is top-notch." *Gordon Mah Ung, Maximum PC*

Q [illegible]

A: "ABS was the only national PC vendor to earn a rating of Good for service in our latest reader survey." *-- Mick Lockey, PC World*

Powered by powerful Intel® Pentium® 4 processor with Hyper-Threading technology.

ABS® Ultimate Gaming systems are the overwhelming choice to power the hottest new games and transform your personal PCs into high-speed professional gaming machines.

» ATI RADEON 9800 PRO Video Card

» Intel 875P Chipset Motherboard

» Creative Sound Blaster Audigy 2 Sound Card

Corsair XMS PC3200 Memory »

» Seagate Serial ATA150 Hard Drives

Customer Satisfaction

Source: Resellerratings.com May 23, 2003

ABS® Ultimate X5

CoolerMaster Case w/ Acrylic Windows and 400 Watt PS & Neon Light

» **New Intel 875P Chipset Motherboard w/800MHz FSB & USB 2.0**

Corsair XMS 512MB PC3200 Dual-Channel DDR SDRAM Memory

» **Two Seagate 80GB 7200RPM Serial ATA150 Hard Drives w/8MB Cache**

Pioneer 16X DVD Player

» **New ATI RADEON 9800 PRO 128MB 8X AGP Video Card w/TV Out & DVI**

Creative Labs Sound Blaster Audigy 2 Sound Card w/ IEEE 1394

Microsoft Wireless Optical Desktop Keyboard and Mouse

Microsoft Windows XP Home Edition

Preloaded Microsoft Age of Empires and Delta Force Black Hawk Down

Free Software: Microsoft Works 7.0

Free 1 Year Onsite Service with 24/7 Technical Support

Free ABS® PC Organizer, 3" Color Binder for Manual, Drivers, etc.

Add NEC 22" 25mm 1920x1440 Color Monitor @ $549

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology at 3.0GHz w/800MHz FSB

$1999

» *ABS® Ultimate PCs with the Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with Hyper Threading Technology*

Power up your X5

Elevate your gaming experience to the highest level

Intel® Pentium® 4 Processor with HT Technology at 3.2GHz w/800MHz FSB

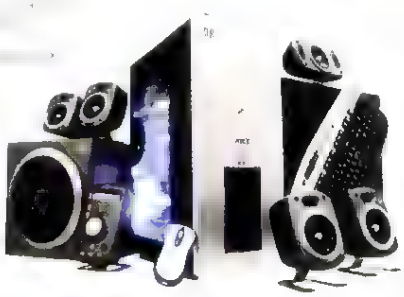
Corsair XMS 1GB PC3200 Dual-Channel DDR SDRAM

New ATI RADEON 9800 PRO 256MB 8X AGP Video Card w/TV Out & DVI

Pioneer A05 DVD+R/RW Drive

Logitech Z-680 5.1 THX 6-Piece Speaker System

$2899

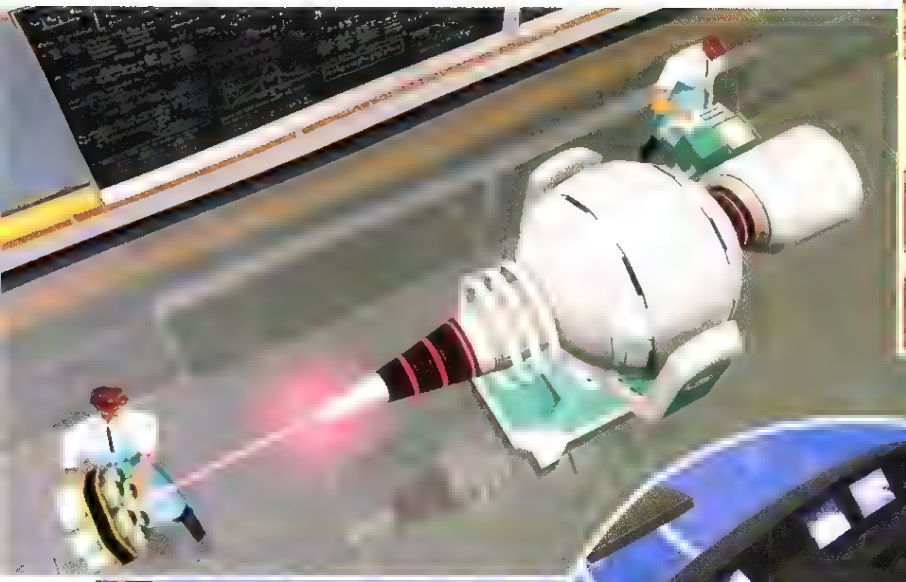


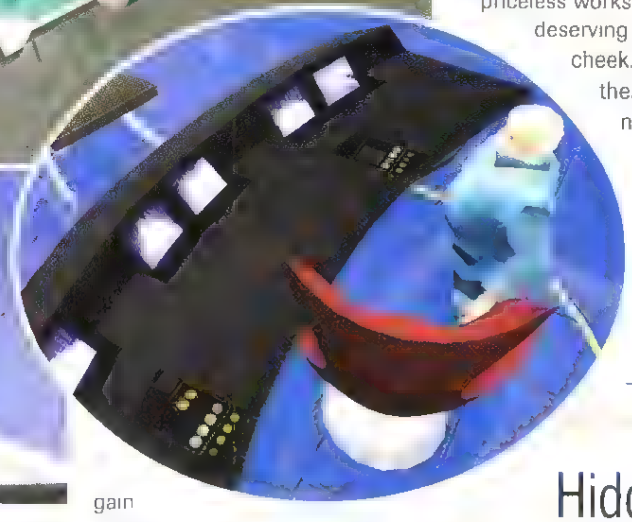
ABS®

www.abspc.com/4game 800.876.8088

▸1 Year Limited Parts Warranty ▸Lifetime Labor Warranty ▸Lifetime Toll-Free Tech Support ▸30 Days Money Back Guarantee

▸▸Sales Hours: Mon-Fri 8:30AM-5:30PM PST ▸▸Technical Support: Mon-Fri 8:30AM-5:30PM PST





[clockwise from top left] "No, no, you don't believe we're on the eve of destruction"; Notice the nice, shiny reflections of the bullet-laden terrorists; The classic portrait of an evil genius trying to locate his car keys; Defending your base against invading agents is crucial.

Evil Genius

DEVELOPER Elixir Studios
PUBLISHER Vivendi Universal
RELEASE DATE 2004

EVERYBODY WANTS TO rule the world only a chosen few recognize the heady delight that comes from destroying it Scaramanga, Hugo Drax, Dr. Evil. . just saying the names leaves most people shiv ering with delight Hence the concept for *Evil Genius*, a real-time strategy affair that spoofs '60s superspy films, casting players as madmen turned global conquistadors.

Building a doomsday dev.ce is your *raison d'être*, yet doing so requires money and parts. To obtain these items, you'll need to build a secret lair, defend the base, gain notoriety, and attract evil henchmen who act as helpers. It's a vicious circle, though; once established, you'll undertake daring missions for fun and profit, which in turn attract the attention of global peacekeepers. This is precisely when the need to recruit top talent and build evil superweapons enters the picture, right about that time that wetsuit wearing do-gooders infiltrate your secret HQ.

Filled with funky gadgets and gizmos, the game also requires you train minions in varying disciplines. Some will become prime interrogators, others smooth talkers, and yet more signature villains like a voodoo witch doctor or seemingly helpless granny who wields a mean ball and chain More than worker bees, they'll fuel your burgeoning empire, helping further numerous ends such as technological research, resource gathering and territory defense

Even benevolent agents, whom you oppose, are obnoxiously charming Consider it a sign of the subject matter any product that lets you kidnap pop stars, swipe the Eiffel Tower, and nab priceless works of art just for laughs is deserving of the label "tongue-in-cheek." Should audiences find these antics amusing, such novelties could help the gameplay rise above its sole underlying gim mick... and provide the best reason to go out and finally nab those sharks with frickin' laser beams on their heads

–Scott Steinberg

Hidden and Dangerous 2

DEVELOPER Illusions Software
PUBLISHER The Gathering
RELEASE DATE Fall 2003

1999'S *HIDDEN AND DANGEROUS* was one of the prototypes of the squad based tactical shooters that seem to be popping up right and left these days. Czech developer Illusions Softworks, who brought us *Mafia* and *Vietcong*, are currently working on *Hidden and Dangerous 2*, which it believes raises the bar for this genre even further

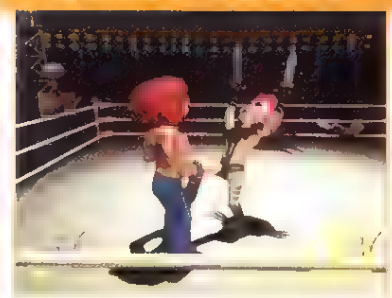
Built on an enhanced version of the *Mafia* engine, it's a blend of action, strategy and tactics, with weapons that encompass the entire British and German arsenals of the period, more than 20 missions over nine different campaigns, over 10 co-op missions, and over 20 multiplayer maps Although the developers may release additional maps at some point, you won't be able to produce your own, as they seem to feel that the building tools are not good modder fodder

[from top] There will be many times that you'll get information from characters that you'll meet along the way; It's a Good Idea to keep alert as your squad reloads; Cutscenes are very transitional in nature rather than a simple debriefing for the next mission; From first or third person view, you'll have a good grasp of just where your squad members are.

Through World War II's theatres across Europe, North Africa and the Pacific, you'll command a squad of four uniquely-skilled soldiers that you'll choose from a pool of many, such as Harry "Grunt" Collins, John "Cowboy" Gisby, Herbert "Doc" Poolside, and more, depending upon the nature of the mission. Beware: if one dies, he's gone for good.

You can play from first and third person tactical views, as well as an interesting birds-eye view that allows you to do a pre-mission recon on the entire map if you like. "You can give orders and place waypoints from this view, press 'start,' and then see how your strategy worked out," says Executive Producer Rupert Easterbrook, who demonstrated a complex mission sans god-mode, and who was careful to point out the five types of motion captured crawling, of which there are several varieties—some "on your belly" and some "on your hand and knees." Easterbrook's performance exhibited that your success is extremely dependent on tactics and planning. "This is all about strategy," he says. "It's not *Quake*."

The NPCs are highly responsive to the action and carefully scripted so that it feels as though they're really *in* the world as opposed to just "busying it up." Even with all the competition in the WWII game space, its huge levels, good looking, high-res graphics, the currently popular "jump in and drive almost any vehicle" feature, and a decidedly *Ghost Recon SOCOM*-y feel, make *Hidden and Dangerous 2* look like a solid tactical comer. —*Cindy Yans*



CELEBRITY DEATHMATCH

Straight from MTV to your PC, whether you want it or not, it's everyone's favorite clay-mation wrestling matches. With 15 top celebrities (including such crowd-pleasers as Busta Rhymes, Cindy Margolis, Tommy Lee, Dennis Rodman, and Mr. T), Referee Mills Lane, and of course the hosts, Nick Diamond and Johnny Gomez, you can finally act out your deepest fantasies in the privacy of your own home. [Take 2]

RAINBOW SIX 3: ATHENA SWORD

More counter-terrorist action from the *Raven Shield* team brings you eight new missions, five new multiplayer modes, eight multiplayer maps, seven more weapons, and three "classic" missions revamped for the latest version of this popular shooter. [UbiSoft]

BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL

It's an adventure game! It's an action game! It's a platformer! It's—all of the above. *Rayman* creator Michael Ancel's latest is a multi-platform opus that focuses on cinematic immersion (the entire game is letterboxed) and a wide variety of gameplay. As teen photographer Jade, you fight, take pictures, explore, and everything in between, as you try to save your world. [UbiSoft]

Uru: Ages Beyond Myst

DEVELOPER Cyan Worlds
PUBLISHER UbiSoft
RELEASE DATE Fall 2003

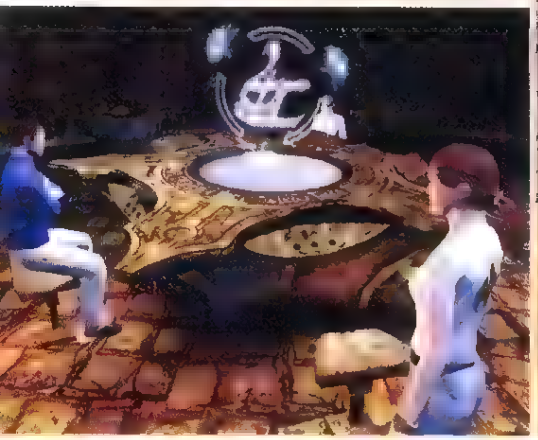
IN THE PRE *SIMS* world, *Myst* was the game that captured the imagination of the masses only to be universally reviled and misunderstood by the hardcore. Deriding it as a slideshow with pretty pictures, people missed the point entirely: it remains one of the deepest and most involving gaming worlds ever created, and a fable about the power of books and storytelling.

According to Rand Miller, one of the creators of *Myst* and the CEO of developer Cyan, *Uru: Ages Beyond Myst* is an "evolutionary reinvention of the experience *Myst* provided." While it was earlier pitched as a massively-multiplayer game, it's essentially a single- and multiplayer hybrid, with regular online updates. "We want to let people explore the worlds together," says Miller, "and we want to make it not end."

Miller says he wanted to do something "unique" online, and thus far, it appears successful. You start with a piece of real estate and a library, and as you journey to new worlds, you acquire "linking texts" which allow you to jump from place to place. In your own private place, you control who can and cannot visit. From there, you can visit neighborhoods and cities, each increasing the number of people you can interact with. Finally, you can enter worlds and solve puzzles that unlock more information about the D'ni civilization and open new Ages for your exploration.

You'll still buy a complete, single-player game in the box, and Miller likens it to a "good novel in a box." The world visuals are amazingly detailed and imaginative, Cyan is including a lot of parental controls to make it very family friendly, and Miller hopes that they'll have more to offer people than the similarly mass-market friendly *Sims Online*, which didn't resonate with its fans.

Miller has some concerns about the disappointing sales of *The Sims Online*, but is confident Cyan can pull this off. "It's about creating an experience where everything is interesting," he says. Whether the fans agree remains to be seen. —*Steve Bauman*

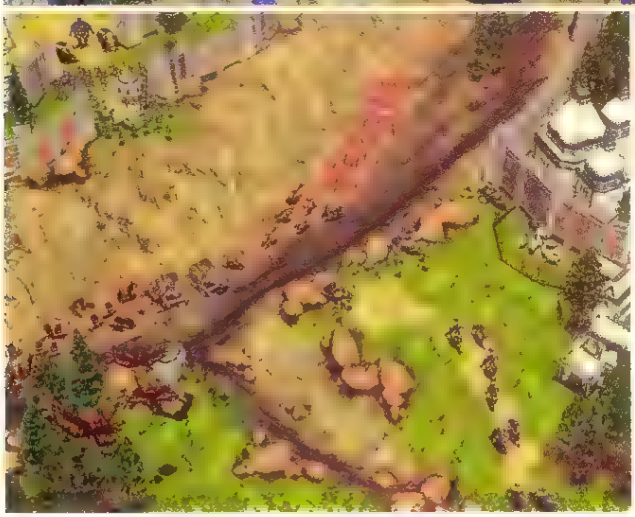


URU: The Teledahn Age, looking very Myst-y. There will be many minigames available in multiplayer.

Age of Mythology: The Titans

Developer Ensemble Studios
Publisher Microsoft Games
Release Date Fall 2003

AS IF PLAIN-JANE gods like Set and Odin weren't enough, Ensemble Studios' expansion pack for *Age of Mythology* will provide a lot more divine content. *The Titans* introduces a fourth mythic culture, the Atlanteans, denizens of the fabled land that, supposedly, sunk beneath the sea long ago thus providing much fodder for novelists and fabulists of the future. In the game, however, Atlantis still thrives, and can call on the ancient Titans themselves for assistance. Atlas, Cronus, and others will be at your beck and call to do battle with the Greeks, Norse, and Egyptians from the original game. *Titans* will also include a new single-player campaign



[above] Cutscenes will contain snippets of story-advancing dialogue. [left] In a cavern, in a canyon, excavating for a mine.

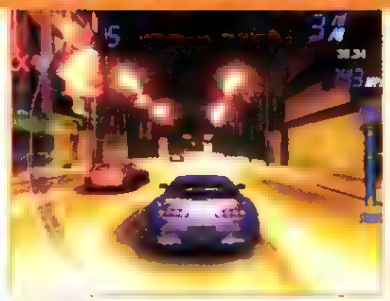
with 12 scenarios, as well as a dozen new god powers for all and sundry (and they've really pumped up the powers availability this time around). 80 different unit types including 18 new human units and 10 new myth units will make their appearance, including a behemoth that regenerates himself, and automatons that regenerate one another in a sort of "orgy of healing." After reaching level six, any unit can be "knighted," greatly increasing its effectiveness.

While superficially "just another big unit," the Titans are actually uber-units, and by far the most powerful and destructive forces in the game. They're constructed like Wonders, but they require an enormous Underworld Gate investment and represent the apex of your civilization's divine accomplishments. If you're successful in completing one, it'll most likely be a "Game-Over, You Win" situation. The Atlantaens have other advantages as well, including no need for fixed gather points, and a "repeat" feature for all production facilities. You can just pump out units with out looking back, and they'll continue to reproduce until you say "Ack! I can't believe I just made 23 Hydra — that's *way* too many heads!" or until you run out of resources. While this does reduce micromanagement, you'll still need to be careful. You'll also have the ability to convert humans into heroes, and to use most god powers multiple times instead of just once.

Worshippers of Gaia, Kronos, and Oranos, the Atlanteans gain various abilities from their deities: Gaia provides surrounding protective vegetation, Kronos gives you the power to instantaneously move any structure to any other place on the map, and Oranos allows you to "teleport" through the air—the inverse to the Greeks' Underworld Passage power. For multiplayer games, *The Titans* will include an assortment of new maps, and a new gameplay mode as well, according to designer Bruce Shelley, who graciously but firmly declined to expound.

For a game that was an evolutionary development of the classic *Age of Empires* line, *Age of Mythology* has managed to add a significant number of improvements to the genre without losing the basic qualities that made the earlier *Age* games such hits. And now, it's *Titan*-ic—even without Leonardo DiCaprio. —*Cindy Yans*

quick takes



NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND

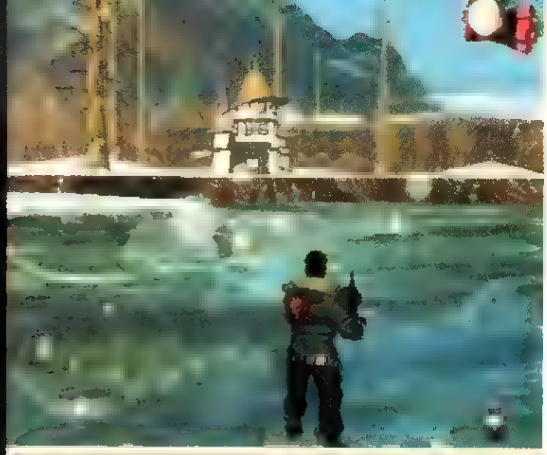
Because you know you've always wanted to put neon lights on your Toyota (and your computer case, apparently), EA is bringing this series to the world of urban street racing. Expect the usual amazing graphics, tunable cards with licensed brands, multiplayer, and all the lovely sounds an over-revving and over-stressed four-cylinder engine can provide. [Electronic Arts]

VEGAS: MAKE IT BIG

The creators of the superb *Monopoly Tycoon* are the latest to try to produce a compelling casino management strategy game. Organize your interiors, buy and sell competitors, all in detailed 3D. [Empire Interactive]

PLAYBOY: THE MANSION

In this sim-in-a-bunny-suit, the basic design framework reveals a game with business, social interaction, and role-playing elements. The open-ended campaign structure casts you as a young Hef, struggling to build an R-rated empire. [ARUSH]



[left to right] You'll be in and out of so many vehicles that they won't know what hit them or what they hit; You're a walking time bomb in a very Wonderland-esque universe. [below] Well he certainly looks like something out of Giants.

Armed and Dangerous

DEVELOPER Planet Moon Studios
PUBLISHER LucasArts
RELEASE DATE Winter 2003

TRUTH, THEY SAY, is stranger than fiction, but the idea that a game featuring a cockney thief named Roman, a robot called Q1 11, a Scottish Mole Miner named Jonesy, and Rexus, a "stinky, unpleasant wreck of a man" could be "based on a true story" stretches credibility far past the breaking point. In *Armed and Dangerous*, though, it's pretty immaterial whether you believe any of it. Planet Moon's next big thing following its success with *Giants* relies on over the top action, wry humor, and impressive visuals for its power, not on its veracity. This is not a development house built on slavish historical recreations after all.

Rather, what you get is a graphically intriguing if logically challenged backdrop for 21 levels of, as LucasArts refers to it, "over-the-top, bullet-splaying action with a twist of humor." The rather nasty King Forge rules the world of Milola, recovering from an icicle famine and the Lime-Dixon Wars. Your mission, as you might expect, is to depose His Majesty and make the five detailed regions of the world safe for, um, thieves, robots, miners, and madmen apparently. In gameplay reminiscent of *Giants*, you hack, slash, blast, and kaboom your way through hordes of Grunts, druids, Goliaths, and twiglets as you search for the Book of Rule, which somehow contains the key to getting rid of Bad King Forge - and "no death animation is the same," says LucasArts Producer, Dan Pettit. Your 17 weapons are similarly odd, ranging from the Vindaloo Rocket Launcher to the Topsy Turvy bomb.

The game's third- or first-person action focuses mainly on mass carnage, specializing in the sort of rampages where you start a level with your finger on the trigger and don't let up until a cool million or so enemies lie in heaps at your feet. All the while, your band of "Lionhearts," as the rebels are called, keeps up a steady stream of commentary, exhortations, and just plain Scottish gibberish. The slender backstory starts with robbery and ends with rebellion and liberation, but really, do you care? Probably not, not when you are knee-deep in dead penguins, gibbed twiglets, and ranting Scotsmen. —*Cindy Yans*

Each race has unique buildings, and workers will automatically fix walls when it's safe.

Kings of War

DEVELOPER TimeGate Studios
PUBLISHER TBD
RELEASE DATE 2004

IN 2001, an unknown company named TimeGate Studios released the curiously named real time strategy game *Kohan. Immortal Sovereigns*. With no real expectations (or anticipation, for that matter) from players or critics, it turned out to be one of the year's best-reviewed games. *Kings of*

[above] You still control armies as opposed to individual units. [right] The move to 3D allows for more interesting special effects.

War, also known as "the game formerly known as *Kohan 2*," is now merely "inspired" by that previous game, but it remains a real-time strategy game where you don't micromanage troops in battle or gather resources.

The designer for both the original and the non-sequel, Ian Klimon, says that the main goal for *Kings of War* is to keep the core elements that people loved about *Kohan* but make the entire game more accessible, and that includes a move to full 3D graphics. "We want to take advantage of the 3D of the game," he says while showing off the *WarCraft III*-like graphic design. The designers also added buildings for your cities, but workers are automated, and the buildings are placed automatically. "We don't want you to micromanage structures," he says, but what this change allows is proper siege strategies.

Klimon says that it's important to note that the game remains focused primarily on management and expansion, the two elements that separated the original from the pack. You still control armies as opposed to individual units (with a new "flanking" unit added to the mix of front line and support roles), with the exception being a few siege units. "You control going into combat as opposed to the combat itself," is how Klimon describes the approach. There will be six unique races and five political factions to choose from, and each side has unique units and buildings.

It sounds like a lot of stuff, but Klimon says that each race has elements that tie them to others. "It's a different ways of implementing the same mechanics [with each race]." He also says the AI is getting rewritten. "We're not scripting encounters," he says, saying the AI adapts to the player's style and figures out the best strategy depending on the situation.

On a mostly superficial level, *Kings of War* appears more conventional than *Kohan*, but if it retains that feeling of being different, TimeGate may be on to something. "The focus, for us, is always on the fun part," says Klimon. And what's "fun" about *Kings of War*? "Combat, flanking," he says. "Real strategy." – *Steve Bauman*

quick takes

WORMS 3D

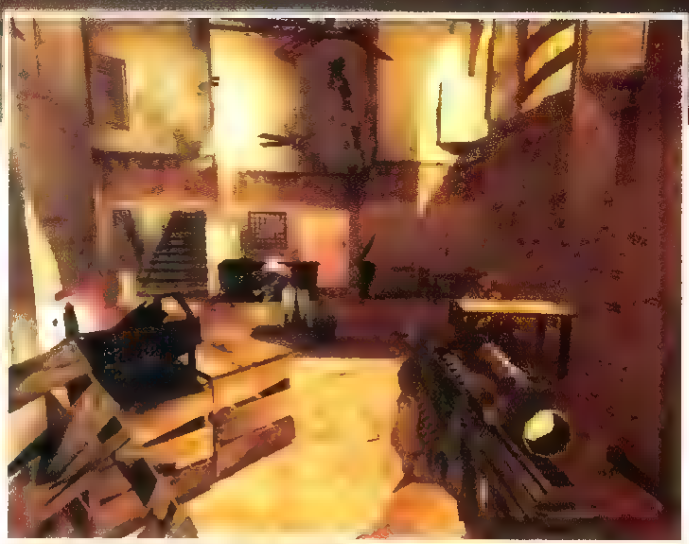
The worms crawl in, the worms crawl out, the worms go 3D and we all .. are not surprised. This latest take on the classic artillery game features the lovable annelids in three colorful dimensions, complete with bazookas, grenades, air strikes and a host of offensive and defensive moves. [Activision]

CONFLICT: DESERT STORM II BACK TO BAGHDAD

This third-person team shooter picks up where the original left off, sometime in 1991 with Saddam Hussein (remember him?) still up and about and causing trouble. Your team of crack commandos gets to wreak havoc in Iraq, in larger, more realistic battles. [Take 2]

ADVENT RISING

There's reason to hope this sci-fi collaboration with author/icon Orson Scott Card might break the author tie-in jinx. A third-person action adventure, it promises story-driven gameplay with a healthy dose of action and superb visuals. It's also the first in a planned triptych of titles, for the PC and Xbox, and uses the *Unreal*-engine. There'll also be a novel based on the game. [Majesco]



[above] I think this means the mission to stop the nuke was a failure. [inset] This is the kind of action you can expect from Shadow Ops (Xbox version shown; PC version will feature higher-resolutions, but that's about the only visual difference.)

Shadow Ops: Red Mercury

DEVELOPER Zombie Studios
PUBLISHER Atari
RELEASE DATE Summer 2004

YOU CAN'T SWING an MP4 nowadays without hitting a tactical shooter, and Atari is entering the fray with *Shadow Ops: Red Mercury*. Developed by Zombie Studios, who in the past was responsible for the *SpecOps* series, this *Unreal* powered game is going for a "big action movie feel" according to Zombie's Mark Long. You're a Delta Force operative picked by the NSA to pursue "Red Mercury," a substance that can be used as a nuclear accelerant.

Though the game will come out first for Xbox, the PC version will have different controls and support higher screen-resolutions Both versions feature over 20 levels set all over the world—from Syria to Russia to the Philippines, 20 or more military and special forces weapons, and 10 multiplayer maps

The action, as demonstrated on an Xbox, is mind-blowing, with explosions, gunfire from all directions, and lots of examples of that fun Karma Physics engine (think falling bodies). There's a lot of team play, and you can listen to radio chatter of various special forces units from the UK, Russia, France, and Germany, who are all helping you keep that nuke from launching. It's all incredibly intense, like *Black Hawk Down* (the movie). "That's what we want," says Long. And so far at least, that's pretty much what they've got. —*Steve Bauman*

The Bloody Magic

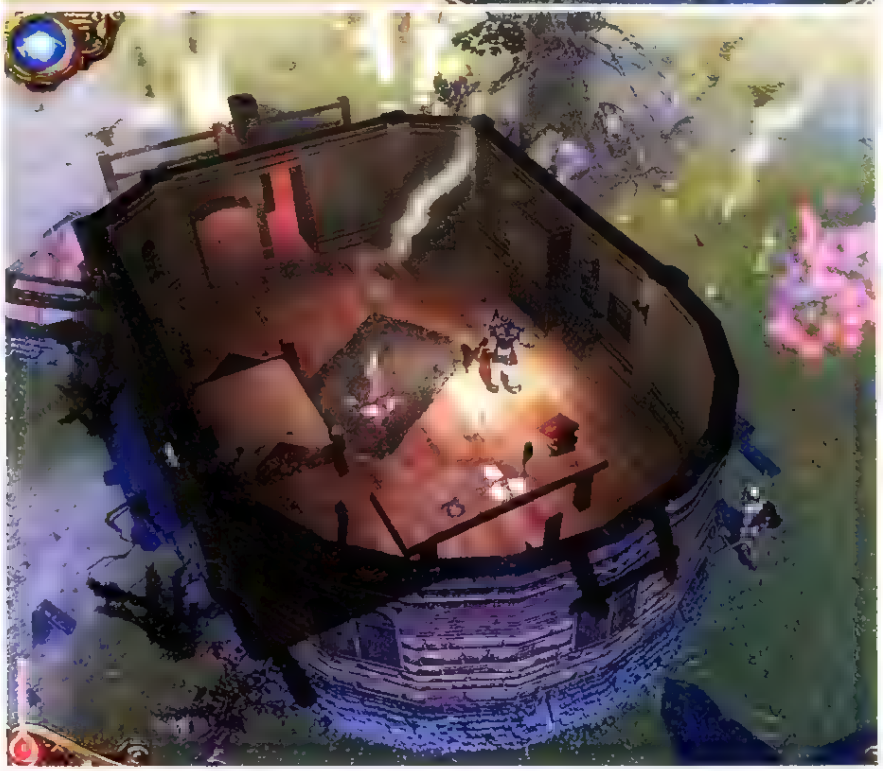
DEVELOPER Sky Fallen
PUBLISHER 1C Company
RELEASE DATE 2004

ROLE-PLAYING GAMES have, in most cases, not been known for their elegant plotlines and subtle portrayals of human nature, so it should come as no surprise that *Bloody Magic* (actually "*The* Bloody Magic) has about as much nuance as a flaming gargoyle. Start with an immortal bad guy, Modo, who does Something Bad in the afterlife. As his punishment, he's stripped of his powers and sent to that unutterable horror known as Earth, where he's destined to repent his ways and contemplate his navel Naturally, being an Ultimate Bad Guy in training, Modo sets about recouping his awesome powers and sets out on the now-familiar course of revenge and retribution that is required of would-be doombringers. Your task, as you might imagine, is to thwart Modo and stop him from destroying the big blue marble—or, contrarily, to help him along (and *then* where will you sleep, eh? Ever think about that?)

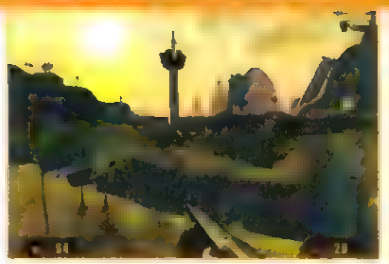
Played in third-person, this single and multiplayer game offers a "richly detailed" medieval environment, but with a twist Instead of the usual fighter/magic user/thief trio of classes and their sub-classes, everyone gets to be a mage. That's right, you can be any class you want, as long as it's "magician." There will, however, be over a dozen different types of magician specialties, each with its own magical abilities and characteristics. These differences will be

most important in multiplayer games, where different players can wield their unique specializations for the good of the group. Multiplayer games will follow a converted form of the single player story line, but will also allow you to engage in one-on-one duels or compete in a sort of professional wrestling match for the magic wand set.

With over a dozen schools of spells, an original storyline, unusual characters, and the ability to mix and match spells to create unique combos, *The Bloody Magic* is out to catch the eye of the bloody-minded and the bloody minded at heart. *–Cindy Yans*



[clockwise from top] What would a medieval world be without a fearsome horn-ed dragon? Offense in this game is more magic than metal; The three-quarter perspective and cut-away of the room look a bit like Baldur's Gate.



VIVISECTOR: BEAST INSIDE

This 3D action game offers a different take on the *Island of Dr. Moreau*. Set in the modern era, you investigate the 19th century experiments of a mad scientist intent on merging human intelligence with wild animals. You'll play one of three characters, each with his or her preferred methods of dealing with the first-person combat that makes up most of the game. [1C-Action Forms]

UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2004

More is better is the theme for the next round of this perennial shooter favorite. Leading the charge for the 2004 version are two new game modes, Onslaught (team-based, with vehicles) and Assault (solo-oriented). Six Assault and nine Onslaught maps will join the 20 other new maps for the existing *Unreal Tournament* game types, as will voice-over-LAN/IP support, and all the stuff from *UT 2003* as well. [Atari]

DELTA FORCE - BLACK HAWK DOWN: TEAM SABRE

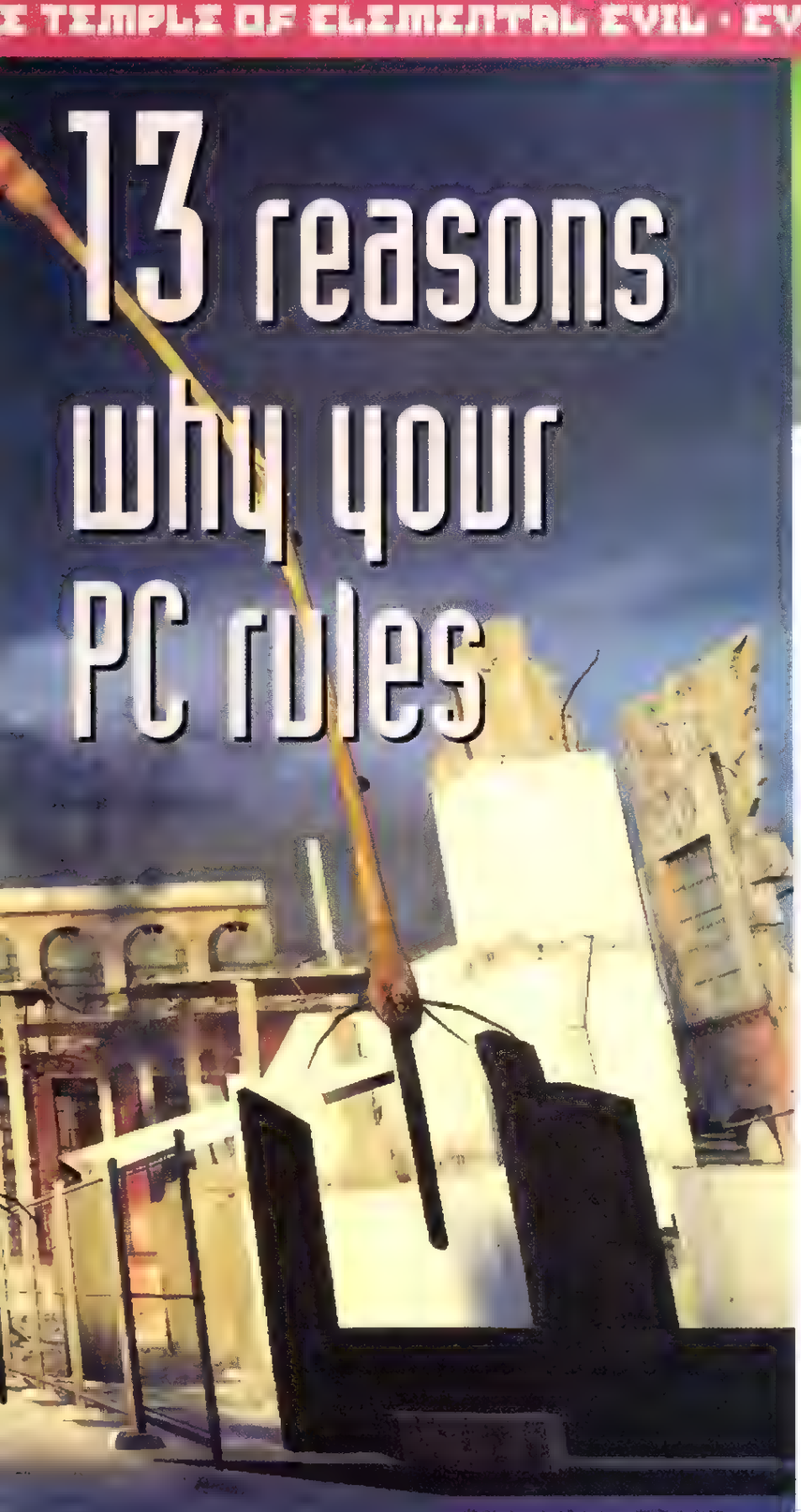
Featuring two new single-player campaigns, this add-on drags players through South America and deposits them in Iranian oil fields as they face off against genteel drug lords and terrorist factions, or against one another with over 30 new multiplayer maps that will now include fully controllable land, sea, and air vehicles. [Novalogic]

N · CITY OF HEROES · DOOM 3 · DUNGEONS & DRAGONS:

VIVA LA PC!

MASQUERADE: BLOODLINES · WORLD OF WARCRAFT · CONTRACT JACK: THE OFFICIAL PREQUEL TO NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

13 reasons why your PC rules



Half-Life 2 and (top) The Matrix Online

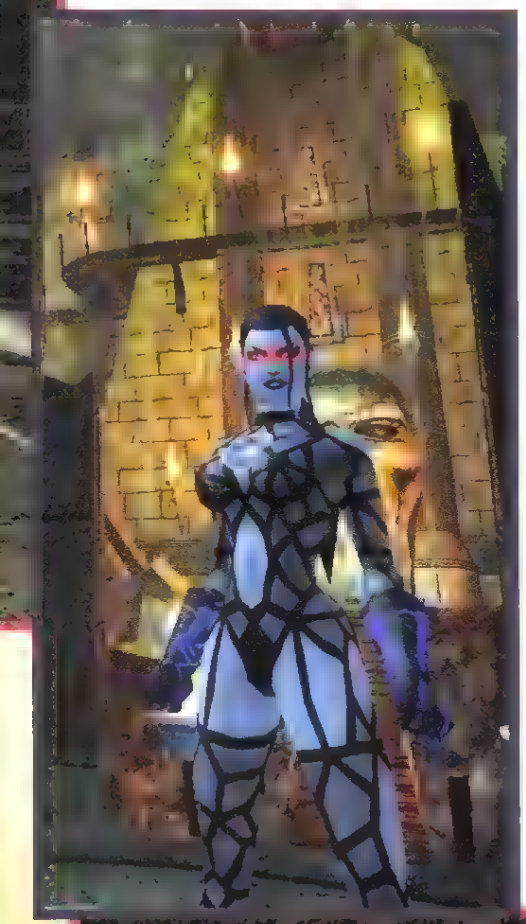
HOW many times have you heard that any given game will be the one to save PC gaming from certain death? Industry analysts indicate that the heyday of PC gaming is over and that we'll all be playing console games for the rest of our lives, but this pops up every time new consoles debut. Consoles are here for the long haul, but PC gaming is stronger than ever, as evidenced by the games on the following pages.

Although it seems as though many long-time developers are jumping ship to play "console port," others have been quietly (and some not so quietly) nurturing several titles that may just herald a new dawn for PC gaming (some, like the sequels to *Deus Ex* and *Thief*, were worthy of inclusion but have simultaneous console and PC launches). So here are 13 games in development that might give you a reason to take a break from that gamepad when they ship sometime in the next century.

CITY OF MECH MEN

BY CINDY YANS

City of Heroes will let you live out most of your dreams that involve wearing tights. Or being a robot. Or a superhero robot. For fans of comic books, this is a massively multiplayer game worth looking forward to.



If you've ever wanted to slip into a spandex muscle suit, inflate it to the max, cover your head with a mask so your friends and colleagues don't make fun, and run around solving crimes with a sidekick whose battle-cry might even be more innovative than "Spoon!" your opportunity is now approaching. In the wake of *Freedom Force*, the *Spiderman* movie, and *X-Men United*, and most likely preceding next *Spider-Man* film, NCSoft plans on releasing ***City of Heroes***, a massively multiplayer online role-playing game where man meets Marvel.

During a spring demo of this product, the oft-reinvented game really appears to be heading in the right direction. As in most MMOs, it has an extensive backstory (overkill, actually) dating back to 1823 when unassuming Smithport evolved into Paragon City, in which the game is set, some time after The Rikti Invasion during which savage aliens devastated the planet. Most of the heroes have died, the hero organizations are empty shells, and it's your job to repopulate them and prevent the Rikti and all of the underworld groups surrounding them from overpowering Good. Most of the zones will be outdoor locations with much of the combat and missions taking place in hazard zones.

You choose to specialize in the fields of Mutant, Science, Technology, Natural, and Magic and choose a particular power set from more than 40 different powers, each of which has sub-powers that relate to factors such as such as range, damage, area of effect, and special side effects. Yes, this gives you many variations of character types, but it's also about image, right? The models look excellent – from women with Militant Breasts whose bodies are glazed by a spray on body suit, to hulks with impossible abs, amazing quads, metallic jaws, you name it. Using the areas of Head, Upper Body, and Lower Body, you can customize down to the tiniest detail, or opt for a randomly generated character.

Gameplay is generally what you'd expect from the genre, and Cryptic Studios is using the "public-private" zone concept that many other MMO developers have adopted. There are mission zones that spawn only during quests, hazard zones where you'll find the everyday robberies, muggings, gang warfare, and vandalism, and "trial zones." "These are zones that are restricted based on your level, and will, for the lower zones, be where you are most likely to need a full group," says Lead Designer Jack Emmet. "And at the higher levels, they'll be dangerous." NPCs referred to as "Contacts" will give you quests that are thankfully logged so that you can look up what they asked you to do, what you're currently doing, and where be able to find them again. If they become a "confidante" you can communicate with them remotely.

There will be an initial level cap of 50, and at level 10 you can join a group, or a Super-Team (like a guild). But lone wolves will be able to solo. "Heroes can solo as much as they'd like, but there will be some things that teams and groups will be needed for," says Emmet. "However, those are not impediments to going up in level."

Even at this writing, the game looks like a living comic book that invites you to join in and experience all of the flying, jumping, and stunt action of a platform game, in some of the coolest costumes ever. Start practicing your battle cry. "Spatula!" anyone?

DEVELOPER CRYPTIC STUDIOS • **PUBLISHER** NCSOFT • **RELEASE DATE** FALL 2003

DOOM 3

BY JASON CROSS

THOUGH now officially announced for Xbox, the next spooky gorefest out of id Software will surely land on PCs first. A game like ***DOOM 3*** is all about immersion—high fidelity graphics and sound that push the limits of even the most powerful PCs to trick you into feeling like that horrible hellspawn is slinking out of the shadows at you, not some virtual gun-toting avatar you simply manipulate. No way, no how, will an Xbox create this feeling as well as a PC, with its more powerful video cards, not to mention far greater RAM for high-resolution textures and high-quality audio. More importantly, id's games have always been fertile ground for user created content, and that's an area that even Xbox Live hasn't touched yet.

Not much new information is available about the latest in the *DOOM* saga, but it continues to look more polished as its release rapidly approaches. The focus is squarely on single player suspense and terror, with atmosphere provided by one of the most advanced graphics engines around and full 5.1 audio. People will need to play it if for no other reason than to see what a $400 graphics card can really do.

The visuals are dingy, dark, and decrepit, and there are flaming skulls. Hey, it must be DOOM 3. John Carmack's latest engine powers amazing visuals like those seen here; get ready to upgrade later this year. Be afraid, be very afraid.

DEVELOPER ID SOFTWARE • PUBLISHER ACTIVISION • RELEASE DATE FALL 2003

THE TEMPLE OF ELEMENTAL EVIL

BY CINDY YANS

DEVELOPER TROIKA GAMES • PUBLISHER ATARI • RELEASE DATE FALL 2003

BACK before the dawn of time, around 1985, Gary Gygax's *Dungeons & Dragons* published its first adventure, using the *D&D* 1st Edition ruleset ***The Temple of Elemental Evil*** was a romp through vileness populated with the worst sort of fallen priests, undead hordes, and tax collectors.

Fast forward to 2003 where the Greyhawk universe befittingly makes its computer debut in the selfsame tale. *Arcanum*'s Troika Games is promising a full implementation of the *D&D* rules and then some, calling the augmented ruleset "Edition 3.5." They're making the minutia transparent, though, which will really simplify the game for those who like their RPGs "lite," but the whole nine yards will be available if you *really* care that you rolled a critical response "1," giving attackers a +2 to hit, removing any positive Dex bonus to your AC, producing a 50% chance to miss in combat, and bringing you down to half speed.

"It's like *Arcanum*, a very open ended story, very non-linear, the game ends totally differently depending on the choices you make," says Troika Programmer Sean Craig. "There's lots of ways to win the game, and multiple solutions to quests." Dressed in a good-looking retooled *Arcanum* engine, *Elemental Evil* is a single-player-only game, complete with 230 spells, over 50 feats, and dozens of skills, in which you can command a party of up to five characters, plus up to three followers and familiars, possibly including a summoned namable chicken.

The title boasts some really good-looking procedural special attacks for its more than 100 monsters. For example, there's a "tongue attack" during which a monster frog impales you with his tongue and swallows you. You have three choices: being digested, being freed by your party, or blasting it into grisly frog guts from the inside out.

Your alter egos will top out at level 10 (half of the normal 3rd Edition max of 20), but with full support for things like spending experience points to make custom magic items, and all the detail inherent in the game system, this should easily let you experience a vast and challenging adventure. And speaking of challenging, you can choose to play in "Iron Man" mode. Here, you can neither re-roll your character, nor save the game at any point. So when you're dead, you're dead. Game over. Restart. No one can revive you — not even the named chicken.

EVERQUEST II

BY CINDY YANS

SONY never intended to steal away so many lives when it debuted *EverQuest* in 1998. Or did it? The Norrathian gameworld has spawned five expansions, an online PS2 game, an upcoming real time strategy game, countless action figures, clothing, Zippo lighters, knapsacks, watches, international Fan Faire events, and a strong (although unauthorized) presence on eBay. Still at the top of the heap, and the strongest pioneer in the evolution of the text-based Multi-User-Dungeon, the game is undergoing a post-apocalyptic overhaul.

EverQuest II brings Norrath into the distant future where most of the world as we knew it has been destroyed. Its outstanding features include improved character customization that reduces the notion of Dwarven and Elven clones, a new "Tradesman" ability that enables you to smith, tailor, and chew gum at the same time while creating way more valuable items, a dynamic quest system, some outrageous emotes, and 15—make that 16—playable races. Members of the newest race are a bunch of humanoid rodents that, when they wax communally, look a bit like Stewart Little and *Willard*'s Ben meet Racso and the Rats of NIMH. Better known as "Rotunga," these vertically challenged fur balls will have great bonuses in dexterity and stealth—think Rogue-slash-Monk.

While the gameplay paradigm remains basically the same, the widely expanded basic content and stunning graphical quality (imagine the original treant, which looked like a mustachioed Grinch in a brown dress, transformed into an entity as noble as *The Two Towers*'s CG Treebeard) may very likely tempt many longtime players to dump their cache of level 60+ uber-characters and defect to the future.

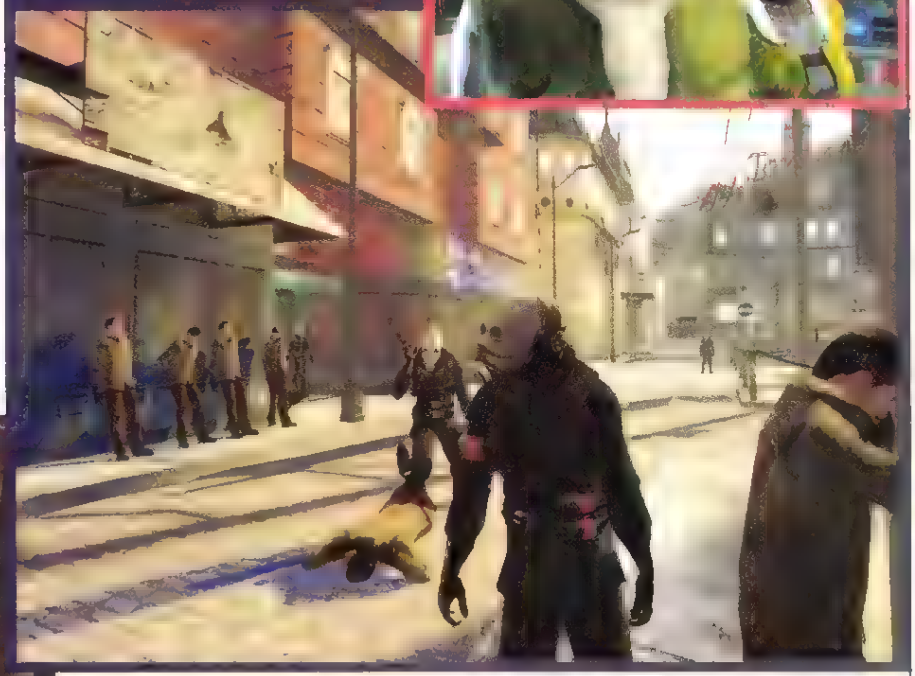
DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER SONY ONLINE ENTERTAINMENT • RELEASE DATE WINTER 2003

DEVELOPER VALVE SOFTWARE • PUBLISHER VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES • RELEASE DATE SEPTEMBER 30

HALF-LIFE 2

BY JASON CROSS

We give up. We try our best to keep from falling prey to hype, and it's not really all that hard. But sometimes a game comes around that makes your jaw drop, and this year's model is Half-Life 2. Static screens alone don't do it justice; the 30 minutes of gameplay shown to the press and public (at least those willing to wait in enormous lines) at E3 blew everyone away.



MODERN PCs are technically superior to consoles, and no game better illustrates this than ***Half-Life 2***. Valve holds its cards close to the vest, only displaying small snippets of gameplay that fade out just as something really cool is about to happen. But what they've shown is simply on a whole different level than anything else on the market or in development. It features an amazingly advanced graphics engine that is equally at home displaying dense indoor environments cluttered with objects as large cityscapes and outdoor terrain. Physics are applied to everything, down to measuring how objects break or float/sink in water, and exactly what sounds they make when all this happens. Even at this stage, the AI appears impressive. There are even vehicles you can drive, and though Valve has shown no multiplayer at all, the developer assures everyone that it's going to be a major feature and will include said vehicles. A real highlight of the show is the character animation technology, which creates believable facial expressions and non-language-specific lip-syncing simply light-years beyond any other game.

These features come together to produce the most believable virtual world yet, one that seems sure to revolutionize the genre as much as the original *Half-Life* did. Combining the capabilities of the game's custom Source engine with Valve's usual unprecedented commitment to the mod community will surely result in killer new game experiences for years to come. It's hard not to get swept up in the wave of hyperbole and hype surrounding the title; we've yet to meet anyone that has seen it in action and not felt the raves are totally justified. As for the promised September 30 release, we'll see.

North Africa, 1942:
French soldiers
scorched Axis troops
with blistering
flamethrower assaults.

This Fall,
it's your turn.

DEVELOPER **MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS** • PUBLISHER **UBISOFT** • RELEASE DATE **2004**

THE MATRIX ONLINE

BY STEVE BAUMAN

JACK in, upload, role-play. Welcome to the real world, or at least the world of ***The Matrix Online***. Developer Monolith Productions is working with the Brothers Wachowski to deliver the most meta game out there, one where you log on to log into the virtual city that is The Matrix. (After seeing *The Matrix Reloaded*, such convoluted concepts will probably make perfect sense.) In other words, players take the red pill for some massively-multiplayer kung fu.

Because the timeline of the game takes place after the events in November's *The Matrix Revolutions*, Monolith can say very little about the plot, setting, or mechanics of the game. "[It] contributes to the ongoing *Matrix* story," is about all that lead designer Toby Ragaini can say about it. What the former designer of *Asheron's Call* can say is that they're focusing on three specific areas: producing a rich urban environment, martial arts, and of course fashion and style. Laugh if you must, but almost every multiplayer devolves into who looks the coolest. "Clothing makes a statement about a person," says Ragaini as he demonstrates some of the dapper threads characters can wear. It also substitutes for armor in a fantasy game. (All body types are idealized, because in the world of The Matrix, everyone is cool.)

The environment, as demonstrated, is incredibly rich and detailed. Monolith is using its own, original engine, and they're modeling an entire city, with no load times. If you see a 100-story building, you can enter every single interior room. There's a full weather model, day/night cycles, and of course there are phones that let you move from location to location within the city. (Sorry, folks — no Neo style flying.)

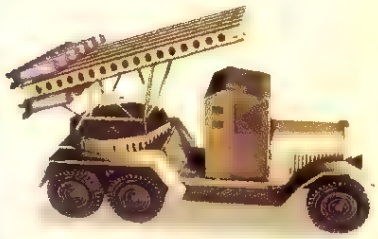
You can face off against opponents in the Matrix, but Monolith can't tell you why you're fighting them — yet. Some people will be allies, others enemies, siding with certain people will anger others, and it will be based around how *The Matrix Revolutions* ends. But what works in a movie may not work so well in a game. "The Wachowskis are gamers," says Ragaini, "so they understand the need for balance."

It's mostly hand to hand combat, with slick moves already in place. But it's not a button mashing fighting game. "It's about tactical level decisions," says Ragaini. The interface isn't final, but the prototype lets you choose from a group of actions, and it automatically takes advantage of the environment to let you jump off walls and such. "Bullet time is a visual reward for progress," says Ragaini as the slow motion kicks in and the camera rotates around the player. ("We want a cinematic combat experience," he says about the constant motion.) Players observing the fight won't also go into slow motion; instead, they'll see your character in super fast motion like you saw from the agents in the first movie. The period will be identical to the slow motion move, so the game won't go out of synch.

Aside from the actions that take place within the game — the missions, the quests, the interaction — Ragaini thinks that people will want to continue playing because they want to continue the story of *The Matrix*. "We're not trying to make this a movie," he says. "But we want to take the existing MMO model and make it cinematic and appealing to fans of the movies."

This is all concept art from The Matrix Online; while Monolith demonstrated it in semi-playable form, it wasn't deemed "screenshot worthy" as of yet. These concepts do illustrate two of the game's three main areas of focus: dense urban environments and fashion. Lots of fashion.

Stalingrad, 1943: Russia bombarded invaders with the Katyusha launcher's hail of rockets.



This Fall, it's your turn.

DEVELOPER TURBINE ENTERTAINMENT • PUBLISHER VIVENDI UNIVERSAL • RELEASE DATE 2004

MIDDLE EARTH ONLINE

BY ANDY CHALK

Even though Middle Earth Online isn't scheduled for release until sometime next year, it's already generating some amazing visuals, no doubt thanks to developer Turbine's work with the already cutting edge Asheron's Call 2.

SINCE Vivendi has been in bed with *Lord of the Rings* licensors, would-be hobbits have been treading water hoping to hear more about breaking information that had to exist, but that Vivendi and friends were playing awfully close to the jerkin. Finally, in Spring of this year, it announced the massively-multiplayer role-playing game, ***Middle Earth Online***.

Turbine Entertainment Producer Aatish Salvi provided a small demonstration of the game in the form of a pre-alpha prototype encompassing two gorgeously rendered areas. The first was the Shire, which is, as you'd imagine, lush and verdant, and teeming with happy hobbits blowing smoke rings (which you'll be able to learn to do) and enjoying fireworks (the construction of which they expect to be a trade skill). They plan for the Shire to be a place where characters with good alignment can rest, chat, build homes and receive missions from Gandalf, et al (wizards will not be a playable race). And the second was Moria, the under mountain area where we saw Durin's tomb awash in an eerie beam of light and covered with runes, which those with a high "language" skill can eventually learn to read

While hour-after hour power-gamers will be rewarded for time spent, the developers are very careful to avoid the extremely dramatic advantages gained by uber-players in today's MMOs. There will be no player-versus-player mode, and they're very devoted to the idea of strong story arcs with moral implications. "The gameplay experience has a very cause and effect relationship," says Salvi. "Whatever you choose to do will have consequences." For example, you can choose to use evil items or don Uruk-hai armor, but doing so aligns you with the Eye of Sauron. The evilly aligned may acquire great power, but will not be able to get into Rivendell to hang with the Elves, build in the Shire, or gain certain other privileges. Or in a more direct causal relationship, when Salvi smashed a shelf in the Morian Mines, the sound (as in literature and film) alerted orcs to his party's presence. "Without choice," he says, "there is no roleplaying."

Finally, at the end of the demo, a terrifyingly portrayed Balrog emerged from The Hell That Lies Beneath Will he or will he not pass? They weren't saying

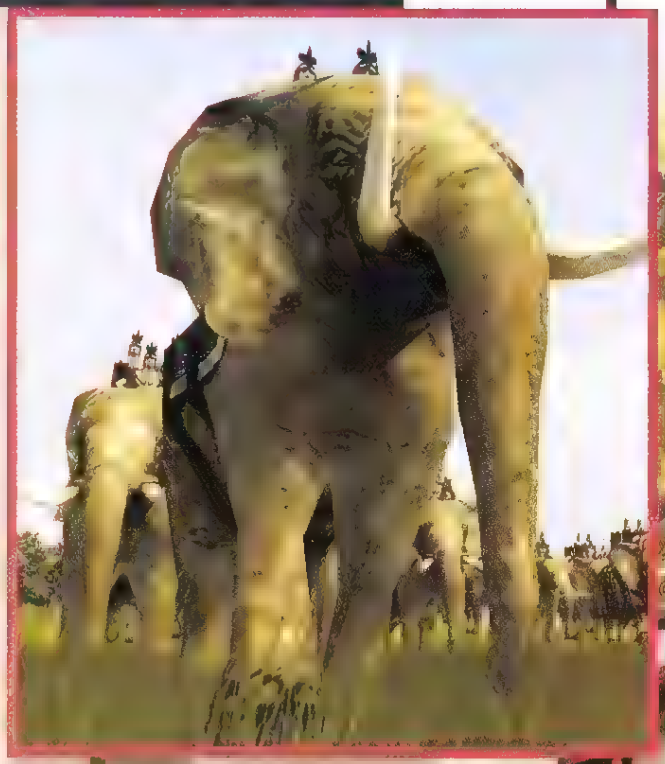
Normandy, 1944:
U.S. paratroopers
assaulted German forces
with daring drops
behind enemy lines.

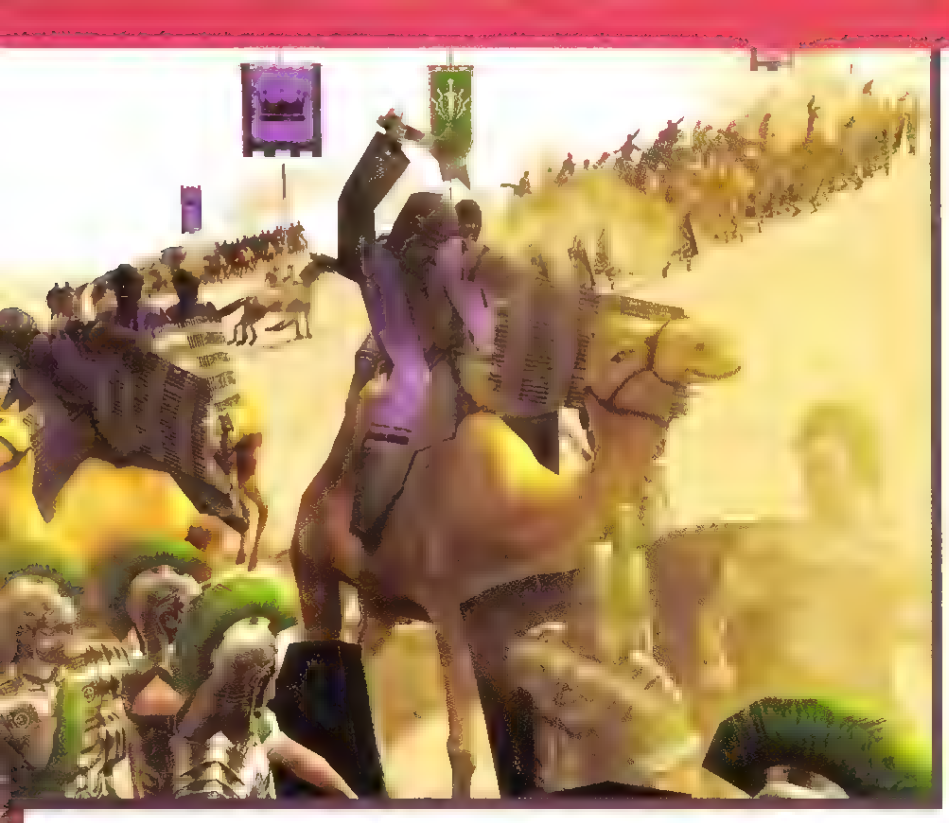
This Fall,
it's your turn.

DEVELOPER THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY • PUBLISHER ACTIVISION • RELEASE DATE 2004

ROME: TOTAL WAR

BY CINDY YANS





THE Creative Assembly is no stranger to encapsulating the art of war in a real-time strategy setting. Its developers have been at it for quite a while. *Total*-ly. After the well-received *Shogun* and *Medieval* titles Creative Director Michael de Plater and company have been working on recreating the glory days of Rome before the fall with ***Rome: Total War***, and they're ready to take on all competition. "We want to take it to an '*AoE*-beater' level this time," he says, referring to Microsoft's laudable *Age of Empires* series. A look at an early version indicates that they may actually not be crazy.

The game brings you through the period between the Roman unification of Italy and the time when Augustus became Imperator. The Assembly's engine replaces the 2D sprites of previous versions with 3D units, and still facilitates the deployment and display of thousands and thousands of troops at one time for large scale battles from a birds-eye view but it is also capable of zooming in to such a degree that the action takes on a nearly cinematic quality. While *Medieval* used a *Risk*-style board, *Rome* will contain a continuous 3D map that covers all of Europe, which makes it a much more strategic challenge to control your troops when you have to deal with actual geography. This sort of thing integrates the strategic and tactical parts of the game in a way you've never seen before.

The diplomatic menu looks a heck of a lot like a refugee from *Civilization III* but Managing Director Tim Ansell appears innocent. "*Civ III*? What's that?" he jokes. As well as pleasing hard-core players, they want the campaign game to be widely accessible to all. Newbies can control all of the minutia via automatic systems, and those who just want to fight enormous battles can have their cake as well.

Scripted AI allows for some pretty awesome attack scenes, with huge war dogs, barbarians, and voiceovers – over 400 pieces of dialogue per culture. But the high point of the demo was when Ansell, de Plater and Marketing Manager Ian Roxburgh shouted – in unison – "*Elephant stampede*!" and dozens and dozens of pachyderms charged and plowed down the enemy troops, goring them with pointy tusks, and trampling them as they screamed and scrambled for their lives. And as many players say time and time again, "Ya gotta love the elephants."

The previous Total War games had good-looking battles on an epic scale, but the move to full 3D units takes it to another level, as does the addition of siege warfare. Watch out for the elephants.

From the Middle Ages to WWII, command the deepest RTS in history.

EMPIRES
DAWN OF THE MODERN WORLD™

Coming this Fall.

From Rick Goodman, lead designer of Age of Empires® and Empire Earth®.

EMPIRESRTS.COM

STAINLESS STEEL STUDIOS™

PC CD-ROM SOFTWARE

RP RATING PENDING ESRB
visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information

ACTIVISION.
activision.com

2003 Stainless Steel Studios. Published and distributed by Activision Publishing, Inc. Empires: Dawn of the Modern World™ is a trademark of Stainless Steel Studios. Activision is a registered trademark of Activision, Inc. and its affiliates. All rights reserved. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association. GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. All other trademarks and trade names are the properties of their respective owners.

THE SIMS 2

BY STEVE BAUMAN

DEVELOPER MAXIS • PUBLISHER ELECTRONIC ARTS • RELEASE DATE 2004

THE best-selling PC game of all time is getting a complete makeover, and for those that tuned out *The Sims*, it may be time for a re-evaluation. Those dismissing it as some sort of "non-game" really miss the point, or at least they don't realize that there isn't a point at all, that *The Sims* is all about process, not goals. It's the ultimate in "emergent gameplay," and ***The Sims 2*** is taking it all to some other new level of weirdness.

"We decided to add the element of time," says the game's producer Margaret Ng, and it's really the biggest change. In other words, Sims can now get old. Because of time, Maxis can now focus on what they call "big life moments," things like your first steps as a baby, your first Simlish words, first kiss, your first job, your marriage, etc. A new 3D engine, which looks fantastic, lets them do all sorts of slick camera tricks to reinforce "the moment."

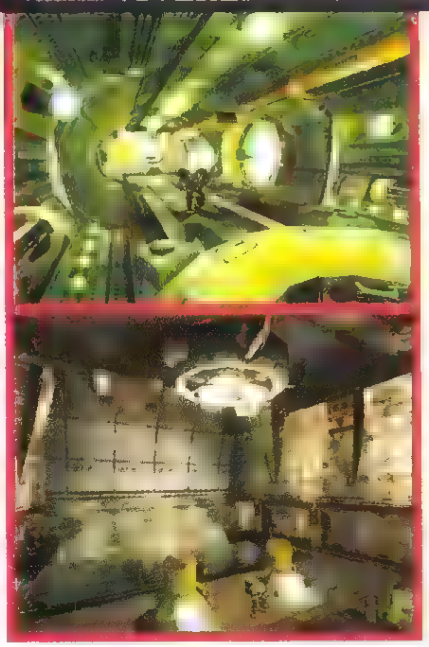
It's obvious after spending a few minutes with the game that it's still unmistakably *The Sims*, with the same sorts of weirdness and humor that permeates the original and its 18 thousand add-ons. But the big news, at least for those fans of genetics and/or past Maxis games like *SimLife* or *El-Fish*, is the ability to mix the DNA of your Sims and generate, well, lots of other Sims. Or mutants. Maxis is including an incredible face editor, letting you create Sims of any race, color, shape, or size. They're creating a realistic genetic model, with recessive and dominant traits, and because Sims fans love sharing their creations, a great looking character, and his or her traits, may spread through the entire Sims universe.

So if *The Sims 2* proves as popular as its predecessor, we'll finally discover what the offspring of a millions of geeks and Britney Spears will look like (there are literally thousands of skins designed to look like her available for the original right now). Who can't wait for that?

DEVELOPER IRRATIONAL GAMES • PUBLISHER VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES • RELEASE DATE SPRING 2004

TRIBES VENGEANCE

BY JOE KNOCKER



THERE'S not much to say about the third *Tribes* game that we didn't already say in last month's cover story. ***Tribes Vengeance*** is much more than simply "Tribes 3." Developed by the much-lauded team at Irrational Games that brought you *System Shock 2* and *Freedom Force*, as well as many who worked on the first two *Thief* games, the franchise is in better hands than it has ever been. All the multiplayer goodness you expect will be there, but a full-on single player campaign that emphasizes story will hopefully broaden the game's reach beyond the die-hard fans of the first two games.

Built using a modified *Unreal* engine, the visuals and performance should be top-notch, and the network code should be well tested and tuned from almost two years of *Unreal Tournament* games using the same tech. Set long before the first game, and with a new emphasis on accessibility and streamlining, this is the *Tribes* game that aims to keep what everyone loved about the first two and dump all the baggage that kept the public at large from latching on.

VAMPIRE THE MASQUERADE BLOODLINES

BY SCOTT STEINBERG

HAVING created *Arcanum* (as well as having most of the team that created *Fallout*), it's obvious that developer Troika knows its role-playing games. Therefore, it's interesting to see that the developer is joining forces with Activision on ***Vampire The Masquerade: Bloodlines***, an all-new interactive outing set in White Wolf's infamous World of Darkness. Of course, technically, its backdrop is a seedy, neo-gothic Los Angeles, but as anyone who's experienced the city's smog problem can tell you, the previous descriptor is just as apt.

First, it appears the title is as deep and statistically accurate as its predecessor, the critically mixed *Redemption*. As with any similar offering, talking to other characters is crucial, and defeating enemies and accomplishing quests yields both experience points and level upgrades, which can then be traded for character improvements. Equipment and weapon acquisitions are also possible. Sticklers will even appreciate a pressing need to feed, lest "the Beast," an external manifestation of the berserker rage which lies within, rear its fanged, uncontrollable little head.

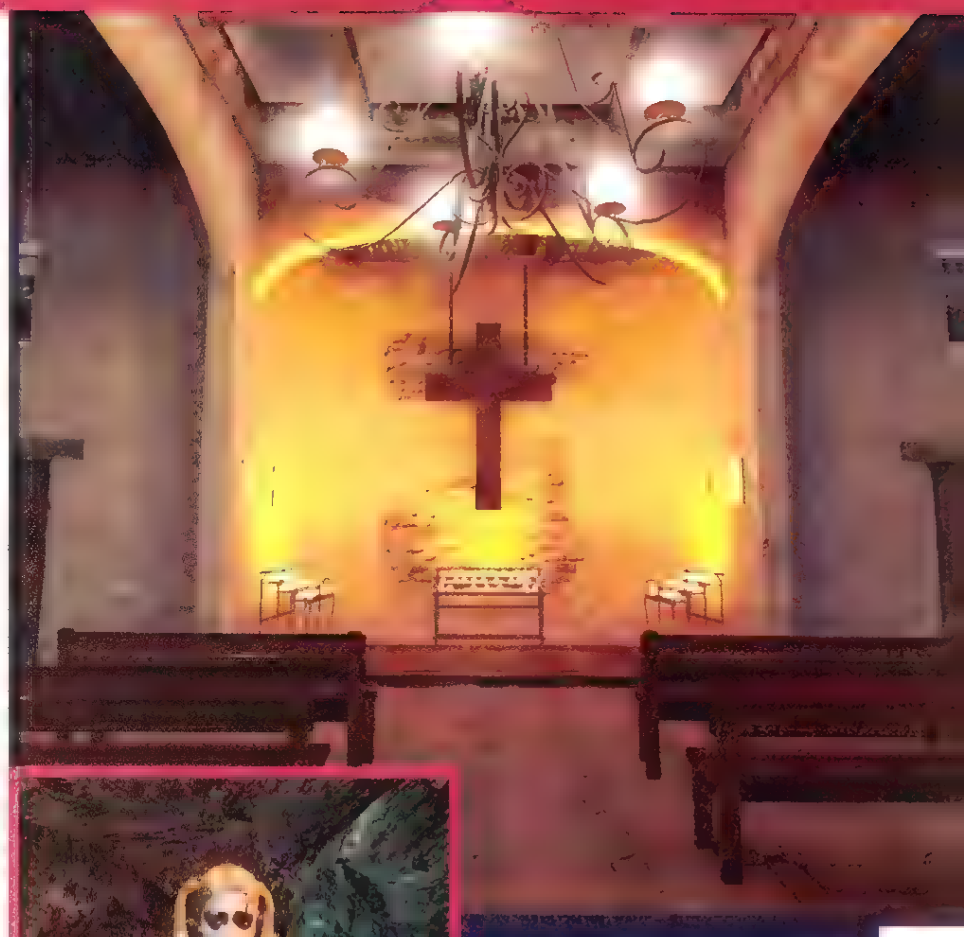
Now the bad: You could easily mistake this sucker for a first person shooter. While it features seven clans such as Toreador and Malkavian, and ticks off twelve powers (obfuscation, seduction, etc.), they're presented directly through the eyes of your chosen character. But on a positive note, featured on-screen antics do receive a considerable boost from *Half Life 2*'s "Source" engine, which Troika has been working with for over a year. As a result, sneaking up and snapping necks or running willy-nilly around a sewer tunnel popping off shotgun shells at a half-humanoid, half-arachnid boss are all possible play components. However, traditional role-players may take odds with the experience, which is more akin to *Deus Ex* than *Dungeons & Dragons*.

Happily, it appears they're sparing no detail in recreating the sheer comprehensiveness of White Wolf's pen and paper experience. For example, clans all behave as described in source materials, and possess appro-

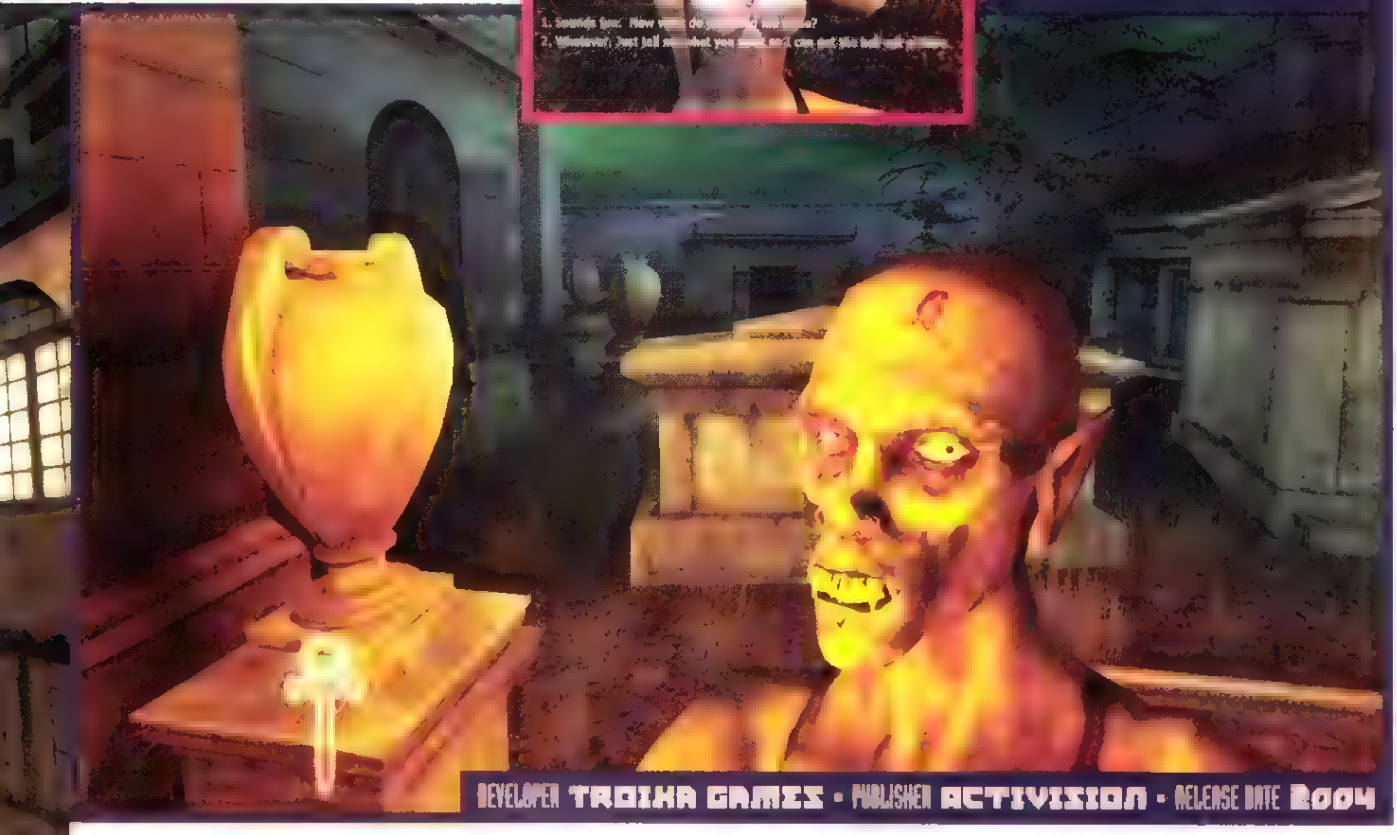
priate talents. During an early peek at the game, a Nosferatu went invisible and a Toreador used branching dialogue trees to seduce a stripper victim. Even a Malkavian got in on the act, using mental abilities to shatter the psyche of an obese, troublesome security guard

Along similar lines, choices are important; utilizing abilities expends blood, and, as in reference books, keeping a good supply on hand is imperative. What's more, you wouldn't want to piss anyone off—NPCs remember slights, and aren't averse to using knives, pistols, stake guns, and flamethrowers at will. Given that they offer many options for tackling each scenario or conversation, you'd best think hard before each decision and choose with caution

Ambitious and expansive, the preliminary showing is very promising. With decrepit Hollywood environs, creepy cadavers, stinking backalleys chances are, most will mistake the title for an interactive Anne Rice novel. The glaring difference? More team-based multiplayer options, naturally



Valve's Source engine is provides the power for these early visuals from Troika's Vampire: the Masquerade game. They're a long way from Arcanum, no?



DEVELOPER TROIKA GAMES • PUBLISHER ACTIVISION • RELEASE DATE 2004

WORLD OF WARCRAFT

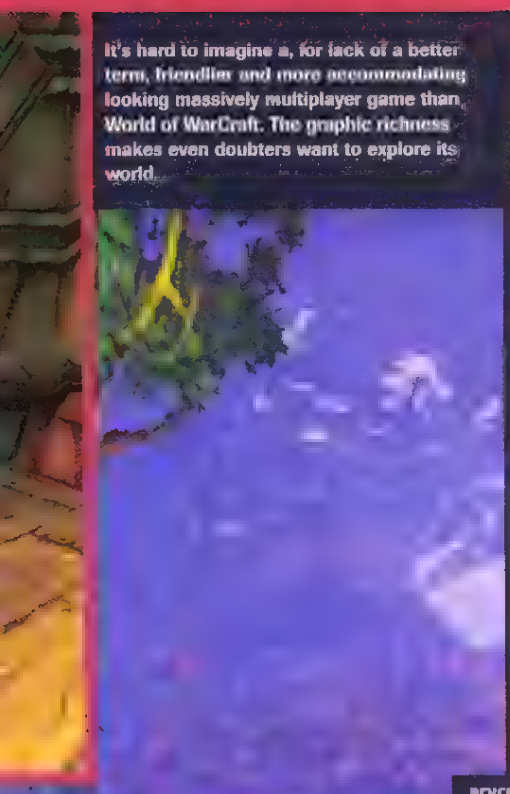
BY STEVE BAUMAN

ON the one hand, ***World of WarCraft*** is remarkably similar to every other massively multiplayer role-playing game currently sucking away the lives of its players or those that are currently in development. There's the same leveling, simple combat, enormous world, etc.

But on the other hand, there's the simple notion of, "But it's an MMORPG from Blizzard." Therein lies the significance of the aptly acronymed *WoW*. People in the industry feel this game, not *Star Wars Galaxies*, will be the "million player" game, the one that breaks free from the rest and finally brings in the unwashed masses Watching and playing the game, it's easy to see why. Particularly when compared to the complex *Galaxies*, it's incredibly simple to play, with a terrific interface and lots of eye candy. It appears very friendly to new players while rewarding the hardcore.

Which is kind of like *WarCraft*. And *Diablo*. And *StarCraft*.

It's hard to imagine a, for lack of a better term, friendlier and more accommodating looking massively multiplayer game than World of WarCraft. The graphic richness makes even doubters want to explore its world.



DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER **BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT** • RELEASE DATE **2004**

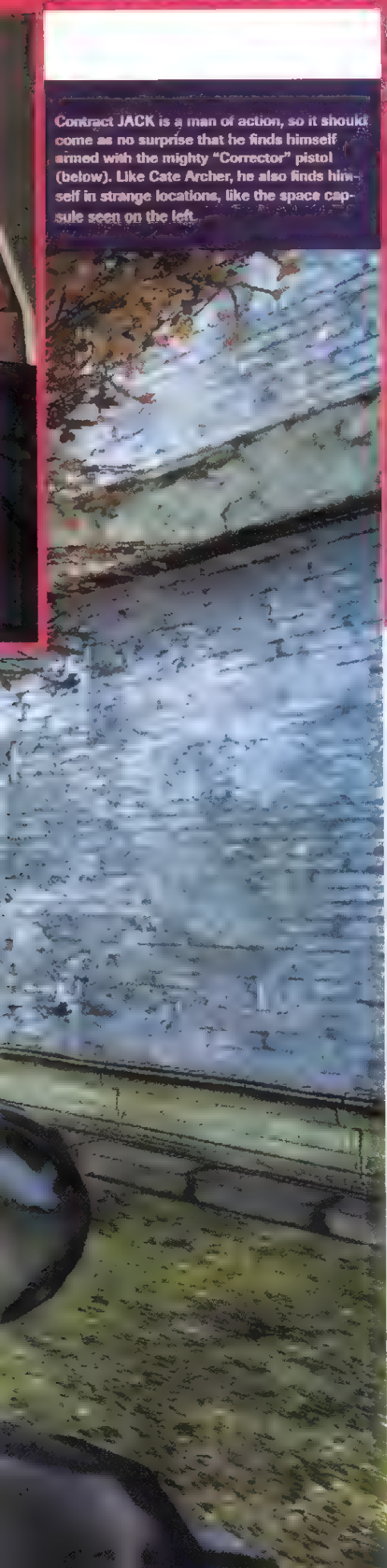
DEVELOPER MONOLITH PRODUCTIONS • PUBLISHER VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES • RELEASE DATE FALL 2003

CONTRACT JACK

BY DOUGLAS ARCHER

THE OFFICIAL PREQUEL TO NO ONE LIVES FOREVER 2

Contract JACK is a man of action, so it should come as no surprise that he finds himself armed with the mighty "Corrector" pistol (below). Like Cate Archer, he also finds himself in strange locations, like the space capsule seen on the left.



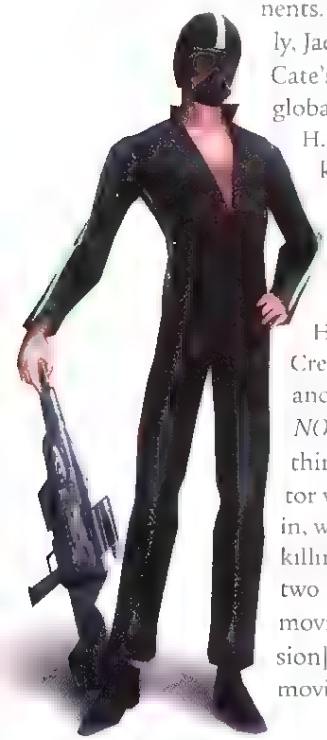
WHAT'S this? A *No One Lives Forever* title sans Cate Archer, the indomitably wry superspy and star of Monolith's critically acclaimed series? Has the first lady of first-person hung up her hairband for a new generation of more "marketable" mascots? Is Cate's departure a sign that truly no one lives forever?

Fortunately, for histrionic fans, Anne Beeman, the producer for ***Contract JACK***, Monolith's forthcoming standalone prequel/expansion to *No One Lives Forever 2*, indicates something quite different. "This time, we wanted to make a game more focused on action, as opposed to stealth, but Cate's a spy, not a soldier," she says. "So we came up with the character of Contract JACK." ("JACK" currently stands for "Just Another Contract Killer," for those wondering about the capitalization.) Still, it begs the question: does Monolith feel that an intelligent, capable female protagonist might be the reason for the middling sales of *No One Lives Forever*, especially in this day and age where the majority of the perceived audience for first-person shooters are teenaged males who seem to gravitate toward generic Kevlar-clad commandos and muscled Aryan ubermensch? "That's not the case at all," says Beeman. "Since this is an expansion, it offered a chance to break out of our own mold and try some new ideas. [Contract JACK] is a chance for us to be a bit more creative with the *No One Lives Forever* universe." Sierra is encouraging Monolith to experiment with the title, and in this case, the choice to temporarily sideline Cate Archer may be more of an opportunity to test the market response to an *NOLF* title that focuses on gunplay over stealth.

The eponymous JACK may not have Cate's svelte stylings or sardonic wit, but he's no slouch, and his skill with firearms means the expansion will be a bit more towards the *Serious Sam* side of the shooter spectrum than previous

More Serious Sam than Splinter Cell, Contract JACK will feature more intense battles that should showcase Monolith's impressive AI. There will also be new vehicles.

installments, although the game will sacrifice none of the story components. More intriguingly, Jack works for Cate's nemeses, the global terror network H.A.R.M. "He's kind of like the Mime King or Magnus Armstrong," says Craig Hubbard, the Creative Director and Writer for the *NOLF* series. "He's a third-party contractor who specializes in, well, contract killing. If the other two titles were spy movies, [the expansion] is an action movie, and we really want the player to feel like he's an action hero." The current character art has Jack as the classic Clint Eastwood style rogue, all snarling good looks and five o' clock shadow.



But this doesn't mean that players will be facing off against Cate Archer and the chumps at UNITY; rather, "Contract JACK," which is set in the period between the two *No One Lives Forever* titles, concerns a rivalry between H.A.R.M. and an upstart terrorist cabal based out of Italy whose signature weapon of terror is a Vespa motor scooter (laden with all manner of firepower) and whose members are clad in striped faux-leather jumpsuits. This rival force is led by a shaggy-maned, cravat-sporting Italian *boheme* with a singular obsession to destroy JACK and claim his manhood as a trophy, and whose insane ambitions will take the battle not only across the Eurasian continent, but also out of the Earth's atmosphere entirely.

This is definitely a *No One Lives Forever* title. Contract JACK himself may be a sly nod at caricatures like Serious Sam, Duke Nukem, and the unfortunately named Will Rock, but the design, story and art direction are much more focused. The game itself is largely about over-the-top gun battles, but Monolith doesn't seem to have sacrificed the signature storytelling of the series nor its uncommonly sharp visual direction.

"To some extent, we went back to the first *No One Lives Forever* to try and find out what people really enjoyed," Hubbard says. "It had more over-the-top moments than [its sequel], and we want to capture that feeling of absurdity and surprise the player with some

really outrageous moments." Sure enough, he isn't joking: *Contact JACK* starts out with Jack awakening in a space capsule hurtling towards the sun, and the first portion of the game traces exactly how the erstwhile superthug got his bad self in this bizarre imbroglio. Hubbard seems to hint at a slightly darker edge to the story. "It's not as much *Austin Powers* this time around," he hints cryptically.

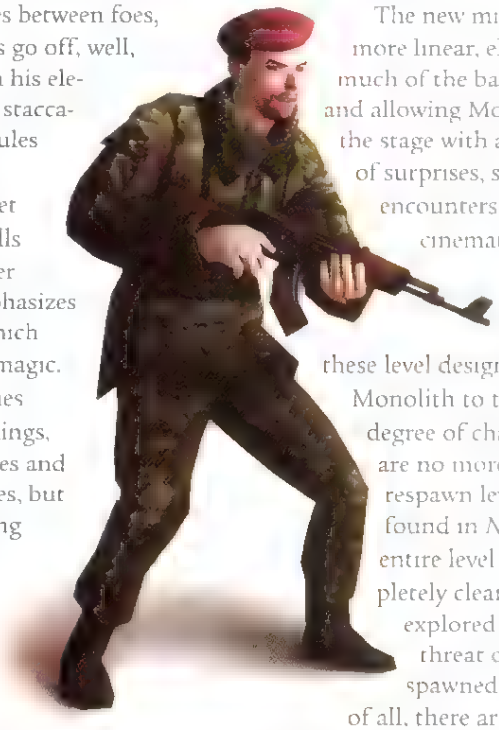
There will be plenty of in-game references and tie-ins to the previous titles that fans of the series will certainly appreciate, says Hubbard. "You'll get to see a different side of H.A.R.M," he says. "Maybe not a completely friendly side, of course, but most fans are probably aware that H.A.R.M isn't all bad either, from the conversations in the previous games." Don't let the emphasis on eeeee-vil fool you, though. The brightly-colored, vibrant scenes and exotic locales are back in full force

Two of the levels were playable during our preview. The first was set in an Italian villa, as JACK fended off an onslaught of thugs in jumpsuits and motorbike helmets. Compared to *No One Lives Forever 2*, there were at least twice as many enemies on screen, and the staggering amount of firepower trained on H.A.R.M's finest was definitely the sort of thing Cate Archer would try and avoid. The level design featured a wealth of nooks and crannies to dive into as bullets, rockets, and Italian curses rained down on the player. Returning fire, it's obvious that the elegantly reactive AI from *NOLF 2* really shines even during the most intense of exchanges, and the new (improved, deluxe, family-sized, etc) event scripting sets up some truly threatening tactical situations, packing the alleys and waterways of the villa with foes.

The second level featured a semi-linear romp through a secret military facility, where JACK was racing to stop (unsuccessfully) a rocket launch. Frequent (and often explosive) events caused dynamic changes in the level layout, blocking halls and rupturing floors with mad abandon, funneling a stream of elite henchmen after the player and sending the body count into the stratosphere.

According to John Mulkey, the lead level designer on the expansion, the emphasis on shooting has resulted in a different approach to level layout and enemy placement, with the requi-

site improvements in the AI. That said, there will still be plenty of chances to sneak up on folks and hear the series' trademark exchanges between foes, but when the alarms go off, well, that's when Jack's in his element. Although the staccato ballet of bullets rules this dance floor, the skirmishes are not set in the wide-open halls of *Serious Sam*. Rather the level design emphasizes cover and tactics, which lets the AI work its magic. As in *NOLF 2*, enemies "scan" the surroundings, looking for safe zones and tactical opportunities, but without all the rolling and hopping often found in other titles. "The emphasis is on spectacle, first," Hubbard says. "The AI is there to make it look convincing. We don't want another shooting gallery with generic targets. We want the bad guys to really seem visually believable."



Since the dramatic increase in the number of foes in a given area, the game will rely more on algorithmic behavior than strict scripting, and it is in this area that Monolith has chosen to focus their efforts. A horde of thugs released into an area will disperse into cover realistically, providing covering fire for their comrades, and trying to maintain position, at least until JACK cuts 'em down. They'll also retreat and advance more carefully, attempting to adjust themselves to the changing climate of battle. The hit reactions and death animations are still in full effect, too—a precise clip of the arm will cause a baddie to drop his gun and back away, and a spray of bullets across a balcony will find bodies lurching over the railing in the classic style of Hollywood westerns. The levels maximize these sorts of over-the-top reactions even more than they do in *NOLF 2*; there's plenty of stairs to tumble down, shelving to crash into, and glass to shatter.

The new missions are also more linear, eliminating much of the backtracking and allowing Monolith to rig the stage with a wider variety of surprises, such as special encounters and in-game cinematic events. Besides keeping the pace frantic, these level designs allow Monolith to tweak the degree of challenge. There are no more infinite respawn levels like those found in *NOLF 2*—an entire level can be completely cleared and explored without the threat of a randomly spawned guard. Best of all, there are no instant failure conditions, which were probably the most unpopular part of the previous two titles. The idea, Mulkey says, is to keep the pressure high without any given scenario becoming too frustrating, and to minimize the need for the sort of reloads that come from cheap deaths or failed objectives.

Contract JACK, being the two-fisted type he is, won't use the plethora of gadgets Cate does to overcome the opposition. Don't expect any barrette lock picks or exploding robo-kitties this time around. However, most of the firepower from the previous title will be making a return, and there are four new guns, two of which are a little more exotic. Why put a guard to sleep when you can knock him out permanently with a well placed rocket? The role-playing-like statistic upgrades won't make an appearance this time around, either. In this case, they really aren't necessary; consider JACK a character whose shooting and armor skills are at max levels. He will also command a few vehicles, including the snowmobile, as he cuts a swath through his opposition.

And, of course, there's the big question: will Cate Archer be in the game? Hubbard and his team aren't saying yet, coyly deflecting the question. Still, they promise there will be plenty of references and cameos to please devotees of the series. Is it safe to assume that the series' star herself will be among the incidental cast? Hubbard simply shrugs enigmatically. "We'll see."

Overall, the single player game is expected to last in the area of 10 hours, a not unreasonable length of time for a standalone expansion clocking at $30, and Monolith is working to make sure there's not a single slow moment in the whole experience. Multiplayer modes will be included with the expansion, including a mode not shipped with the deathmatch multiplayer patch for *NOLF 2*.

At the lower price point and with more accessible gameplay, Sierra and Monolith hope that they can draw new fans into the fold with this standalone expansion, especially those that might be put off by the spy theme and stealth components of the earlier titles. Less James Bond and more Steve McQueen, what Contract JACK lacks in spy panache, he more than makes up for with his versatile sense of violence. It's obvious that the change in heroes has n't stymied Craig Hubbard's writing or direction, and that *Contract JACK* shares the same satirical charm and sharp dialogue of its predecessors. Voices are still being recorded and incidental conversations are still being penned with the assurance that they'll be as good as if not exceed those of the earlier games in the series.

If you've been reading the reviews of the *No One Lives Forever* titles but haven't picked them up because of the spy theme, *Contract JACK* could prove to be a great introduction to what you're missing out on. If Cate's previous outings should just how deadly the feminine touch could be, Jack's the logical converse: he makes a surplus of testosterone look damn stylish.

CHIPS & BITS

www.chipsbits.com

Less cost, more fun.

Europa Universalis Crown of the North
Strategy First
Crown of the North takes place in the years between 1275 and 1340 in a time where nobility and the church held all the power and Sweden was about to launch into civil ear. Plays as Norway, Sweden or Denmark and plot to change the historical legacy of a region seldom explored.

Elder Scrolls Morrowind III: Blood Moon
Bethesda
Your journey north from Vvardenfell by ship will bring you to a whole new world, where the ashlands and rainy coasts of Morrowind give way to forests and hills covered with snow and ice. In the huge wilderness of Solstheim you'll experience snow, blizzards, and new creatures, including frost trolls, ice minions, and wolves...just to name a few.

World War II: Frontline Command
Strategy First
World War II Frontline Command is an action strategy title set within the era of World War II that will appeal to all levels of PC gamers and war enthusiasts. the game opens with the player dropping paratroopers into Europe to disrupt the entrenched Axis forces ahead of the main invasion forces set to land on D-Day. Players must take command of their troops and turn the tide of Axis aggression while conquering fortress Europe, using a vast amount of authentic infantry, vehicles and weaponry.

Star Wars Galaxies
Lucas Arts
It is the height of the Galactic Civil War. Live in the Star Wars universes, alongside thousands of other players online as you define your role within the galactic community. Explore exotic worlds, battle dangerous enemies, and encounter well known Star Wars characters: The role you take will impact the Star Wars universe forever...it is your destiny.

WarCraft III: Frozen Throne Expansion
Blizzard

Madden NFL 2004
EA Sports

1914 The Great War
Cowood

Tron 2.0
Fox

Homeworld 2
Sierra

PO Box 234 • Dept. 11410 • 2520 VT Rte. 100N • Rochester, VT 05767
INT'L 802.767.3033 • FAX 802.767.3382 • US 800.699.GAME (4263)

Source Code 11418

The nose cam on a Phoenix missile .01 seconds before impact.

COMPUTER GAMES EDITOR'S CHOICE

Battlefield: Future

Welcome to **PlanetSide**, where 64-player battles become so 2002

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

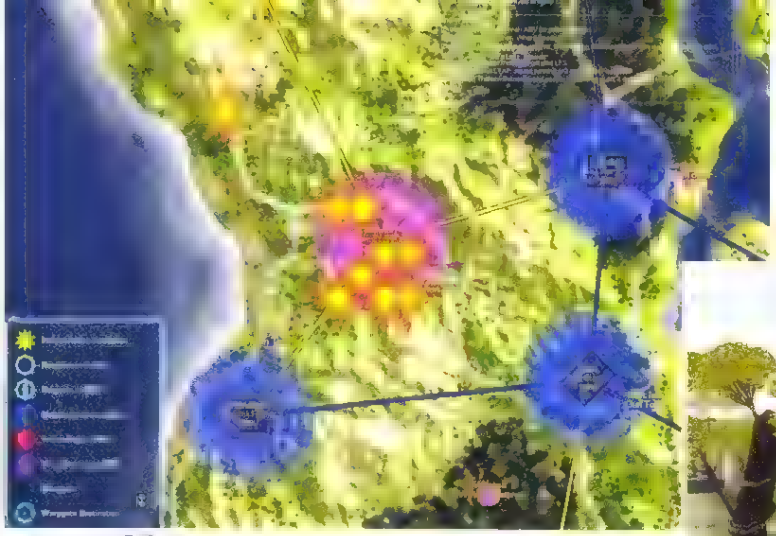
BY BENJAMIN E. SONES

HERE'S A MOUTHFUL: "massively multiplayer first-person shooter" It's a Frankenstein's monster of cumbersome words, and as long as brevity isn't an issue, you might as well cram "persistent world" and "science fiction" and "monthly fee" in there somewhere. Or you could just call it *PlanetSide*, Sony's bid to do for shooters what *EverQuest* did for role-playing games

It does exactly that, and does it with an elegant design that breaks out of the rut massively multiplayer games have been stuck in since day one, a rut filled with tedium. Others have you create a character and then fight battles to earn experience to learn new skills to fight more battles. *PlanetSide* does all that, too—it just does it without the tedium. Like its role-playing cousins, this game is mostly about combat. Like its role-playing cousins, it lacks long-term goals That tends to take the luster off a game once the combat grows tiresome and you realize that the only reward that you are going to get for enduring another repetitive battle is the opportunity to do it all over again. And that's where this game is unlike its role-playing cousins—here the combat is the reward. The experience points are just gravy

Combat tends to be mostly hands-off in these types of games, and with good reason. If you are going to put a few thousand people together on a server and then force them to fight each other, then you need to either take lag out of the equation or have amazingly good net code. *PlanetSide* has amazingly good net code Throw 150 players into close-proximity combat in *Dark Age of Camelot* or *Asheron's Call 2* and you'd have a slide show. Do it in *PlanetSide* and you have one hell of a battle. The first time you stumble onto such a fray, you spend the first few minutes wondering what sort of mystical mojo could possibly allow that many players to duke it out with anything approaching a playable framerate. Then you'll just forget about it and enjoy the ride.

New levels give you points to spend on Certifications (which you need to use specific weapons and equipment) and implants (special character abilities). Levels are easy to earn at first. You can reach third level without even leaving your empire's Sanctuary (you get experience for training) Once you reach sixth level, things start to slow down a bit, but at that point gaining levels becomes less of an issue Once you character has a few certifications, adding new ones doesn't make you more powerful—just more versatile. You might have a wider variety of weapons and equipment to choose from when you equip



[clockwise from left] The base names were obviously generated by drawing random letters out of a hat; Computer Games' own Jason Cross takes a hit for the team; A massive invasion force secures a Terran base.

your character, but your inventory has limited space, so you can't carry more than a few of them at once. Player skill has as much to do with your performance in combat as certifications and equipment, anyway. A good fifth level player can take out a twentieth-level player. Earning new levels is a nice bonus, but mostly the combat is its own reward.

You can jump in and go it alone if you want. Sony has gone out of its way to accommodate solo play with increased experience awards and an "instant action" button that immediately teleports you into the middle of the biggest fight on your server. At its heart, however, this is a team-based game. Easy socialization with large numbers of players is one of the biggest advantages that it has over other multiplayer shooters, the ones that don't come with a monthly fee. Trying to meet up with friends in *Battlefield 1942* (for instance) is a frustrating experience—just trying to coordinate getting onto the same server is a bear, and once you are in the game there is little time for chatting anyway. Sure, you are part of a team working towards a common goal, but you don't organize much. People just jump into the game and do their own thing.

In *PlanetSide*, there is time to chat and reason to do it. Assuming you have made characters on the same server, you can be assured that you will always be playing in the same game world with your friends. It's simple to hook up with friends when you are online, especially if you join an Outfit (a player-made clan), or form your own.

You can form a squad of up to ten players, and working in squads is critical. It increases situational awareness—you can see where squad members are on your map, and squad members can share intelligence on the squad chat channel. At higher levels, the squad leader can set waypoints and draw battle plans that everyone can see. Squads also share experience points, which makes it much easier to adopt a non-combat role. The various skills and combat roles are designed to work best in tandem. A tank pilot is devastating on the open countryside, but unsuited for capturing bases. Infiltrators are great at sneaking into enemy territory, but lack the firepower to claim tactical objectives unsupported. Transport pilots aren't much use without a squad of soldiers to transport.

Teamwork is also critical in figuring out where to fight. With dozens of objectives on each of ten continents and three empires fighting over them, the game world is a couple of orders of magnitude larger than other shooters. Bases are your key goal as they give you a place to respawn, heal, and purchase vehicles, skills, and implants. They also grant hefty experience rewards to players that help capture them. The bases are cleverly organized around a "lattice" of control lines, and you can only capture bases that are adjacent to bases that your empire already controls on the lattice. This eliminates cheap tactics such as sending token forces to grab undefended bases deep in enemy territory, and keeps the fighting concentrated on a constantly moving front line.

The downside of having a large, persistent battlefield is that the game plays like a real war. There is frequent downtime ("hurry up and wait"), a lot of time spent juggling logistics, and a lot of time spent traveling. Good planning can ameliorate some of these things—Advanced Mobile Stations let you respawn in the field, a variety of air and ground vehicles let you travel rapidly across large distances. Once you get over the urge to be constantly running and gunning, you realize that it's not so terrible to have a break between battles every now and then.

Two things the game doesn't have are cheating and griefing. The system for dealing with problem players is ingenious. You

PLANETSIDE: A Reaver provides air support to a base under attack.

rack up "Grief Points" for friendly fire. Stray hits only net you a small penalty. Willfully kill an ally, though, and the penalties multiply exponentially. If you accrue too many Grief Points, you can't fire your weapons until they wear off. Repeated abuse will get your account cancelled. In practice, it's surprisingly effective. Instances of abuse are rare, and when they happen players often take justice into their own hands. If you don't kill other players often, soaking up a few Grief Points to deal with a problem player is no big deal.

Relative to other massively multiplayer games, *PlanetSide* launched with barely a hitch. There was a client patch that inadvertently caused system lockups (quickly remedied), and a number of minor balance issues that still need to be sorted out. The three empires do not seem to be entirely balanced—the Terran Republic, in particular, has a few pieces of inordinately effective weaponry, and some of the certifications within each empire need to be scrutinized (Advanced Medic, for instance, is utterly useless). The experience system still doesn't give enough incentive to defend bases or claim towers, and a few nonessential features (like Outfit logos and a few of the Squad Commander functions) are still not implemented. For the most part, however, the game works as advertised, and works well. By massively multiplayer standards, it's batting a thousand.

But with all the other multiplayer shooters out there, is it worth paying for this one on a monthly basis? Value is largely subjective, but *PlanetSide* does offer numerous perks that you won't find in other games: fast servers, no cheating, larger battles (much larger) with more strategy, more socialization, and a system that makes it extremely easy to meet and play with friends. Sony has announced plans to make regular content updates—the first will add new vehicles and a new strategic objective to the game—though it is unclear how often they plan to make such updates, or how much content they can add without throwing game balance out of whack. This isn't a role playing game after all; Sony is forging ahead into virgin territory. Bully for them.

DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER Sony Online Entertainment • ESRB Teen

Grand Theft Auto Vice City

Where "more of the same" is a good thing

★ ★ ★ ★ ½

COMPUTER GAMES EDITOR'S CHOICE

GRAND THEFT AUTO III is as brilliant as everyone says it is, and the slightly modified *Vice City* should be a gratuitous example of "more of the same cash cowing" that everyone hated about the various *Tomb Raider* sequels. It certainly shouldn't be one of the year's best games, but Rockstar North beats the odds and delivers another superb entry in the Biggest Series in the World™, 2003 edition.

As with the PC version of *Grand Theft Auto III*, *Vice City* is pretty much a direct port of the PlayStation 2 edition. The core gameplay hasn't changed much. It's still a wonderfully open-ended game experience set in an enormous living city, where you can either take missions that advance a plot and unlock new regions of the map or just drive around and find things on your own to do, and the content remains controversial, full of random acts of graphic violence, bad language, and sexuality.

Unless you're an extreme graphics whore, there's little reason to play this edition if you've already gone through the PS2 version. Or is there? Unlike most console-to-PC ports, the controls are improved. Though the Byzantine layout of

Wheee! It's always worth it to search for the various ramps sprinkled around the city.

Don't bother attacking the soldiers to steal the tank; they share a certain fondness for snack goodness with the local police force...

the controls for some of the extra vehicles makes them overly challenging (keep a gamepad handy), there's no question the mouse is a superior device for shooting people on foot. Best of all, Rockstar North does a superb job tuning the keyboard controls for the vehicles, something it's mastered since the first top-down *Grand Theft Auto* in 1997.

There are some AI problems, as pedestrians and cops occasionally run around in circles, and the save system is still annoying, though you can now buy additional safe houses to increase the number of places you can save. The missions are still too rigid, and it gets way too difficult at about the midway point of the game, but there's so much to do outside of the mission structure that it never gets frustrating. If you fail, a cab will now take you back to your mission starting point, or alternately you can just find something else to do until you figure out a better way to solve it.

But all of those are minor quibbles in the face of superb gameplay. Though it boasts some of the finest production values seen in any game—a cast full of Hollywood A-list character actors from Ray Liotta to Luis Guzman to porn star Jenna Jameson, and maybe the best soundtrack to ever grace a videogame—the real star of *Vice City* is the city itself. Styled after Miami in the 1980s and throbbing with the pulse of the *Miami Vice* TV show, it's a tacky neon-lit paradise or a hellhole, depending on your perspective. There's more to do in the city, with hidden areas holding all sorts of secrets (rampage power-ups! races!

There's nothing quite like a nice relaxing day at the golf course.

top sellers

The most surprising game of the year, sales wise, remains NovaLogic's **Black Hawk Down**, which tops the April charts. And as unbelievable as it sounds, there are only two Sims games. On the downside, people keep buying Mall Tycoon. Ugh.

1. **Delta Force Black Hawk Down**
   NovaLogic ★★★½
2. **Command & Conquer Generals**
   Electronic Arts ★★★
3. **The Sims Deluxe**
   Electronic Arts Not Rated
4. **The Sims Unleashed**
   Electronic Arts ★★★
5. **Battlefield 1942**
   Electronic Arts ★★★★½
6. **Zoo Tycoon**
   Microsoft ★★★★½
7. **CSI: Crime Scene Investigation**
   UbiSoft Not Rated
8. **WarCraft III: Reign Of Chaos**
   Vivendi Universal Publishing ★★★★
9. **Diablo II**
   Vivendi Universal Publishing ★★★★
10. **Mall Tycoon**
    Take 2 Interactive ★½
11. **Battlefield 1942: Road To Rome**
    Electronic Arts ★★★★
12. **Sim City 4**
    Electronic Arts ★★½
13. **Harry Potter &The Chamber Of Secrets**
    Electronic Arts Not Rated
14. **Shadowbane**
    Ubisoft ★★★½
15. **Roller Coaster Tycoon 2**
    Atari ★★★★
16. **Freelancer**
    Microsoft ★★★★½
17. **Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six 3: Raven Shield**
    UbiSoft ★★★½
18. **Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell**
    UbiSoft ★★★★½
19. **Age Of Empires II: Age of Kings**
    Microsoft ★★★★★
20. **Backyard Baseball 2003**
    Atari Not Rated

Courtesy of NPDTechworld. The April list is based on units sold by more than 70 channel partners, representing 90% of the U.S. retail consumer market.

jumps!). There's still an enormous variety of cars to "liberate" from their owners, and each vehicle has unique handling characteristics and superb physics. The addition of motorcycles adds an entirely new dynamic, as their faster acceleration and tighter handling opens up a world of ways to escape from the police or to get on the various rooftops of Vice City.

You're still playing a thug in *Vice City*, and the world is still teeming with the sort of underworld lowlifes that only exist in Hollywood screenplays, but it offsets much of its considerable potential by healthy doses of humor. It's full of clever writing and wicked parodies. Like *Morrowind*, *Vice City* represents the very best of two types of gaming, delivering a tightly scripted, semi-linear mission-based story game mixed in with an open-ended simulation that can only be described as *Elite* on a cocaine bender. When it all comes together, when you're on the lam from the cops and catch air jumping across a river to the soothing (and completely incongruous) accompaniment of Cutting Crew's "I Just Died in Your Arms Tonight" on the radio, you realize there's something magically weird going on here. It's the type of game experience everyone asks for but rarely receives. —*Steve Bauman*

DEVELOPER Rockstar North • PUBLISHER Rockstar Games • ESRB Mature

Medieval: Total War Viking Invasion

Bloody fun in a dark age

★★★★½

COMPUTER GAMES EDITOR'S CHOICE

VIKING INVASION is less of an expansion to *Medieval: Total War* than an entirely new game. It doesn't take the easy way out by merely throwing more stuff at the original game's mammoth design; instead, it introduces a smaller and more manageable campaign in a completely different period in history. It turns back the clock to the Dark Ages and focuses specifically on the conquest of the British Isles from 793, the year of the Viking incursions to 1066 AD, the mark of the Norman Conquest.

The new campaign changes the landscape quite a bit. Instead of battling it out as the French, Spanish, or the Holy Roman Empire, you now get the chance to lead the Scottish, Picts, Welsh, Mercians, Northumbrians, Saxons, Irish, or the dreaded Viking horde. You win only by capturing all the provinces—there's no glorious achievements here. Each faction has a retinue of specific, historically based units, but the Vikings deserve special mentioning as they are the most unique faction in the game. They invade from Denmark and Norway, areas that create very little income, and thus are forced to pillage more fruitful territory. They do not need ports to launch amphibious assaults; all they need are ships at sea. This means that no province is safe from a raid as they can maneuver around the British Isles at breakneck speed. In addition, they earn money by destroying buildings in combat, so while creating a steady income is a problem, they rake in money in large, significant chunks and are constantly on the offensive. When you combine these new rules with the fact that the Viking units are the most destructive in the game, you have a faction that is extremely powerful if not a bit unbalanced. (They really are that good.)

Religion takes a backseat in the Dark Ages campaign, so no one tells you not to attack your fellow Christians or threaten you with excommunication. It does play a role in that the Vikings start out as a Pagan faction, but as the game progresses they slowly convert to Christianity, and when that happens they lose their special sea assault and raiding advantages.

There are only a few stumbling blocks, most of them holdovers from the original

GRAND THEFT AUTO: This might be a good time to leave. Or die.

[clockwise from above] Celtic warriors battle Viking landsmen—this is going to get ugly; The new pre-battle screen allows you to organize your forces and save your game; Burn it down! The Vikings earn money when destroying buildings.

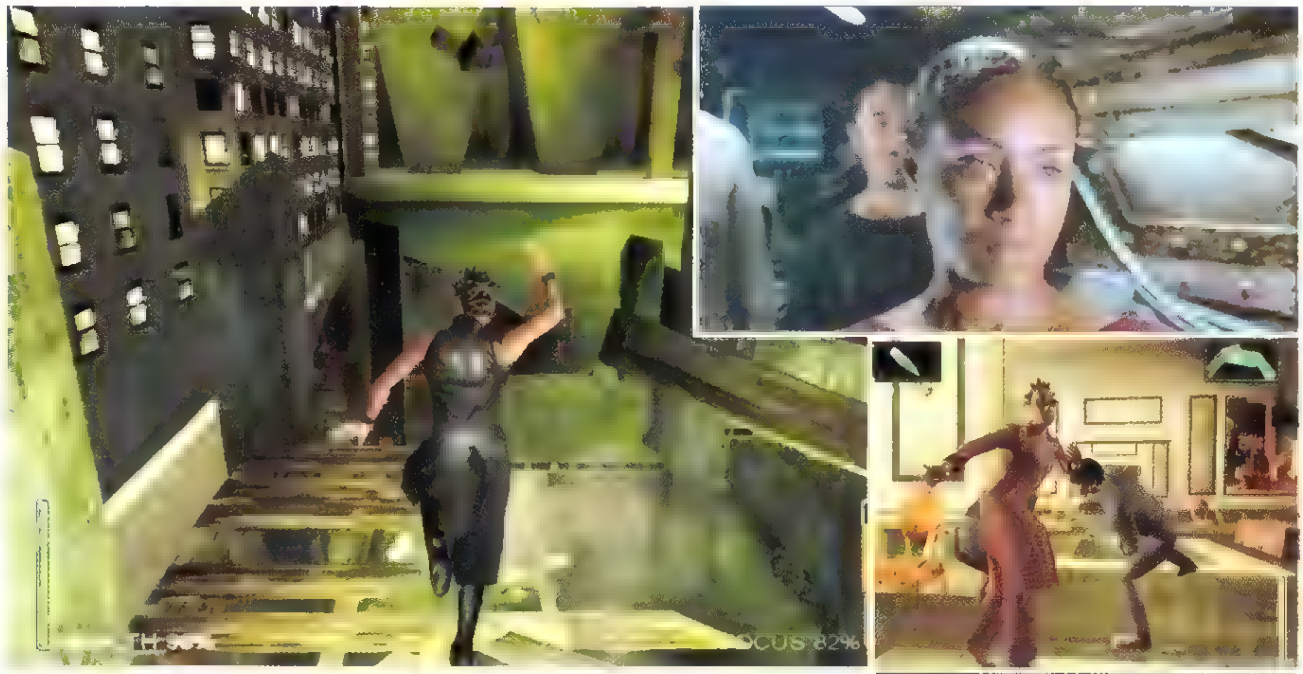
game. A good general/king is still too hard to kill—48 veteran spearmen should kill a mounted eight-star general with ease if he's alone. Diplomacy remains about as bare bones as you can get, and the princess unit remains useless. But there are several tweaks made to the core game design that affects both the *Viking Invasion* and the original *Medieval* campaign. The best is the new pre-battle setup menu that not only allows you to pick your reinforcing units and order of battle, but you can finally save the game before combat. If you have to fight three or four two thousand-point battles in one turn it can take quite a while, so this is a welcome addition. Other enhancements include new buildings that allow you to recruit tougher spies and assassins, generals that die of old age, the ability to pour boiling oil on attackers during sieges, new artillery weapons such as the Organ Gun, and a comprehensive Vices and Virtues list. In the original game, your leaders would earn these traits and you would have no way of knowing it without checking each one individually; the list tells you each turn when one of your leaders picks up a new trait and it helps make things more manageable.

Viking Invasion doesn't stop there, though. You can now play the original campaign as the Hungarians, Aragonese, or Sicilians, and the old campaign is inundated with new units. Many appear as rebel factions such as the Sherwood Foresters, who appear in Mercia, or the Pictish cavalry in Scotland. In all, there are over 27 new units that appear in the original campaign as either rebel units or members of a faction's retinue.

Viking Invasion is a classy expansion pack that fends off the usual criticism that add-ons are nothing more than glorified patches. By adding interesting new units, rules, and a unique campaign, it defines what all expansions should be—not just more of the same, but rather an entirely new way to play an established game.

–William Abner

DEVELOPER The Creative Assembly • PUBLISHER Activision • ESRB Teen



Niobe leaps across a gap between buildings, which is an exciting thing to do... [inset] less exciting is watching Jada Pinkett Smith show emotion. She's angry here. Or in love. Or depressed. [above] On the plus side, you get to fight Smith.

Take the Blue Pill

Enter the Matrix... and exit annoyed

★ ★

BY STEVE BAUMAN

WHILE PLAYING *Enter the Matrix*, you won't find out just what The Architect was yammering on about in *The Matrix Reloaded*. However, the game does a superb job of showing you the exciting warehouses, sewers, and construction sites of The Matrix itself. Forget the interesting environments of other games or the movies; we're talking about tons of mazes, corridors, and repetitive offices, all with a color palette that ranges from "dark brown" to "slightly lighter dark brown." It's enough to make you want to plug yourself back in, permanently.

The entire Matrix experience is a veritable multimedia and marketing extravaganza, with a DVD collection of anime features called *The Animatrix* detailing more of the history. The "all platforms, all the time" *Enter the Matrix* features a plot that runs alongside the film, tracking the exploits of two minor movie characters, Niobe (Jada Pinkett Smith) and her partner in kung-fu Ghost (Anthony Wong). A big draw for the game is additional scenes, shot on the film's sets (or at least the same blue screens that serve as sets nowadays), with a few of the actors. The game replicates multiple scenes from the movie, only from the perspective of Niobe and Ghost.

As with almost everyone else in the movie, Jada Pinkett Smith does her best Keanu Reeves expression with wooden line readings and overly stoic "acting." There's a strange mix of live-action and polygonal movies in *Enter the Matrix*. It's obvious that the filmed scenes were done on the cheap as they contain almost no action, the exception being one brief fight scene between Seraph, the protector of the Oracle, and boxer Roy Jones, Jr., who plays Bailard. Aside from some scenes taken from the actual movie, as soon as anything resembling a special effect appears you get the significantly less interesting, though at least graphically consistent and decently produced, in-engine cut scene. But if you've always wanted to see Jada Pinkett Smith and the luscious Monica Bellucci share a kiss, here's your chance.

Though the story gives you a little more of that Matrix-brand confusion and philosophy, actually playing *Enter the Matrix* proves considerably less interesting. It's a fairly typical third-person action game, with both weapons and hand-to-hand combat, and it most resembles the underrated *Oni*. The criticisms leveled against Bungie's game—namely dull, repetitive levels—are also applicable to *Enter the Matrix*, which also has significantly less interesting combat. There's almost no connection between the mouse and keyboard controls and the movement of your on-screen protagonist. There's no flow in the Matrix-style kung-fu movies—they start up the animation and finish, and you can't interrupt them even if the guy you were attacking is no longer anywhere near you. It feels extremely sloppy and unpolished, though the welcome addition of the time controlling "Focus" meter is interesting. When enabled, everything

moves as if it's in slow motion, a la the bullet-time sequences from the movie, and you can do some slick dives and flips that at least look extremely cool, even if they're not exactly useful.

The first few levels are promising, though the dull level design gets even worse as the game goes along. The AI for the protagonists is wonky, with agents getting stuck on ladders and cops running into walls. They all have terrible aim, which is less of an issue because their sheer quantity would cause a serious problem if they were all crack shots (the advanced SWAT teams found later in the game are better). You can't save anywhere, but the checkpoint system is frequent enough that there are only a few instances where replaying an area delivers the usual level of annoyance. Some of the transitions from area to area, even when a cutscene explains it, are abrupt and disorienting, as if entire segments of levels or narrative were removed. Too often, the game cuts away from letting you actually do cool things, instead showing your character doing the cool thing, like dramatically jumping across a ledge or making some impossible move. Making the gameplay even more unbearable are two interminable driving levels. The controls are terrible, the objectives unclear, and both just drone on way too long.

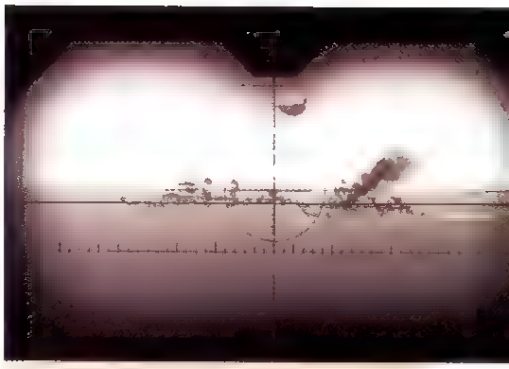
Enter the Matrix also has the honor of having two of the worst final levels in the annals of gaming. (Skip ahead if you don't want a spoiler.) While you might expect some huge final battle, the second-to-last level has you facing off against the copies of Agent Smith, and all you can do is run away. For the entire level. It's not exactly the most exciting, action-movie ending. But it gets worse. The true final level has you piloting the Lagos, Niobe's ship, while it's being attacked by giant Rasta-droids, or maybe they're mechanical squids. (And people mock John Romero for the robotic frogs of *Daikatana*.) It just goes on and on and shares with the driving segments the same terrible controls and unclear objectives.

It's not hard to imagine that a better *Matrix* game would focus on the epic set pieces from the movies, like fighting off dozens of Agent Smiths in an open area like Neo. The idealized *Matrix* would have a narrower focus and less of a desire to present long, boring levels; put the guns away, focus on a killer hand-to-hand combat system. Instead, you get minor characters beating up rent-a-cops in a warehouse or a sewer.

Judged on its own, *Enter the Matrix* is a decidedly mediocre game. When coupled with a level of anticipation for the movie and game that reached a shrill and hysterical level before release, it falls even further short. It makes the mistake of being repetitive and, worst of all, boring.

DEVELOPER Shiny Entertainment • PUBLISHER Atari • ESRB TEEN

With bullets raining down and the "Focus" enabled, you get some cool fights.



A pair of slow-moving targets.

Enigma: Rising Tide

Naval gazing

★ ★ ★

AKIN TO THE infamous "Flying Dutchman," a ghost ship that is occasionally spotted and then disappears just as suddenly, naval combat simulations usually fade away soon after they arrive. The latest to attempt to buck this trend and make full steam ahead is *Enigma: Rising Tide*, a game that was originally designed as massively multiplayer one, which is now scheduled for launch later this year.

The newly released single-player version is sort of a preview of things to come, and lets players enlist for a tour of duty while waiting to battle it online. Set in a 1940s alternate history where the powers of Imperial Germany (the victors of the 1914 Great War), the United States, and an alliance between Great Britain and Japan are waging an ongoing conflict, it has some similarities to the works of alternate history author Harry Turtledove and actually provides the basis for one of the most balanced naval combat simulations to date. By setting the game in this alternate history, no one power has a true upper hand and this should play very well in the multiplayer version while making for a challenging experience. As the action takes place on the high seas, land is seldom seen and *Enigma* certainly is able to evoke the feeling of vastness, yet much of the actual engagements take place at uncomfortably close distances. Throughout a series of missions and three campaigns, you command a variety of

ships as well as the occasional submarine. Just don't expect to take the helm, or even issue orders to a helmsman for that matter, of capital ships like Battleships or Heavy Cruisers. Those larger ships do make an appearance, and you get to fight side-by-side or possibly against some these massive behemoths, like the classic Battle Cruisers of the era, but actually commanding them is being saved for the online version.

While this is disappointing, *Enigma* instead focuses on smaller craft, which despite what you might have seen on *The History Channel*, are essentially the backbone of naval combat. As a result, you get to take in fast moving Corvettes and Destroyer Escorts and break up some convoys, while having to watch out for patrolling aircraft and enemy submarines. In total, 24 different classes of ship, along with six aircraft types make an appearance and all are based on real world vessels and planes of the era, with some room left to help the gameplay balance

The battle has not gone as expected and soon we'll be joining the enemy ships at the bottom of the sea.

What has often sunk previous naval simulations is the often-complex command structure, and *Enigma* manages to overcome these shortcomings both with a quick hotkey system and via a unique voice command mode. Either way, you can issue orders quickly and make snap decisions during the intensity of close quarters naval combat. For good or bad, it also goes easy on the realism and instead focuses on fun; you don't have to manage ammunition supplies for one thing and a handy pop up radar screen keeps you briefed on enemy positions—don't you think British wished they had this in real life when trying to find the Bismarck?

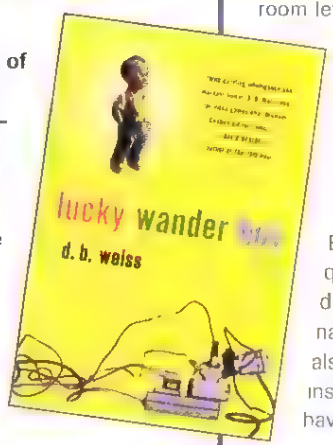
Visually, *Enigma* is solid, the various surface craft and airplanes are nicely detailed, while the visual effects such as explosions and weather conditions are impressive. With gale conditions and pounding rain affecting visibility you can see how hard it is to get a fix on enemy positions, made all the more difficult by the robust AI that keeps you guessing. Don't expect this

This anachronistic radar screen gives us the precise location of the enemy fleet.

spotlight

MAMEd

Adam Pennyman, the prickly protagonist of D.B. Weiss' *Lucky Wander Boy*, is a compulsive-obsessive fan of old-school videogames. Full of witty literary and pop culture references, a chance encounter with MAME, the "Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator," leads to his attempt at creating a "Catalogue of Obsolete Entertainments," a book full of overly earnest and laughably pretentious analysis of every old arcade game in existence. Pennyman eventually becomes obsessed with one particularly obscure and surreal game called Lucky Wander Boy. Whether intentional or not, the novel starts to veer off course as his obsession deepens, becoming nearly incomprehensible as he travels to Japan to find the game's enigmatic creator, Araki Itachi. But for its first two-thirds, it's a funny portrait of a certain type of aimless, over-educated 30-something people trying to find great meaning in videogames, movies based on videogames, and people that make videogames. Not that anyone here can relate. [Plume]



game to be a turkey shoot by any means, even those merchantmen that you'll go after in the early missions have teeth.

If there is one remaining issue it is that *Enigma* seems unfinished, and essentially that is because it lacks the multiplayer mode that promises to be so entertaining. Taking part in these action-packed sorties against the computer is fine, but a multiplayer battle with dozens of ships with individual players would be so much better. For now this feels like a course at the naval academy while you wait to get out to sea. —*Peter Suciu*

DEVELOPER Tesseraction Games • PUBLISHER GMX Media • ESRB Not Rated

Combat is simple and rather bland.

Empire of Magic

A buggy mess

★ ½

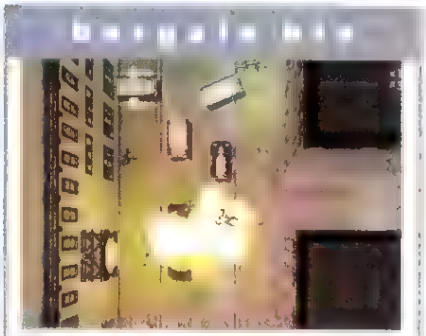
MANY TURN-BASED games like *Civilization, Heroes of Might and Magic, Disciples, Age of Wonders,* and *Etherlords* are all quality games, and either best sellers or at the very least cult classics. But as turn-based games continue to get pushed aside by the real-time strategy monster, it's more important than ever to appeal to the genre's rabid fan base, who will buy almost anything. Enter *Empire of Magic*, which is such an absolute mess that even die hard fans should avoid the temptation.

It's actually a strategy/role playing hybrid, but its design is so bizarre that it crosses the line into absolute tedium. There are 16 missions that further the story of a young mage named Artemian. In each scenario, you must complete a quest such as "go kill the undead guys," but it's difficult because as you move units on the main map they lose action points. These points are also used in combat, so if you move too far and an enemy decides to attack, your units enter the fray with literally no action points. This means they cannot attack or cast spells, i.e. they're dead meat. To top it off, the game ends if Artemian or any other important hero dies, and this happens all too easily. It's an exercise in boredom and irritation as you plod methodically along the map, making sure that you have enough points to defend yourself if an enemy flies at you from out of the black fog of war. It's puzzle strategy gaming at its worst.

To make a bad game even worse, it shipped with a game killing bug in one of the quests that crashes the game every time to the desktop. A patch has since been issued to address this, but no game should ever ship in such a state. Regardless, the core game simply isn't much fun, and even the most ardent fan should look elsewhere to get a turn-based strategy fix. —*William Abner*

DEVELOPER Mayhem • PUBLISHER Summitsoft • ESRB Teen

[Top] The overland map is a huge pain because of the game's use of action points. [Left] The town interface is as simple as the rest of the design.



Cars Go Boom

Taken over Vice City? Sick of listening to Hall & Oates? Then you should check out *Grand Theft Auto 2*. Gameplay is a little rough and ready, and the engine is top-down 2D, but the game has the ultraviolence that made the its successors better than multiple viewings of *A Clockwork Orange*. History buffs can also download the original *Grand Theft Auto* free of charge from Rockstar's web site. [Rockstar Games/1999]

Memory Hog

The forward-looking ***Radeon 9800 Pro 256MB*** *is impressively expensive overkill*

★★★★

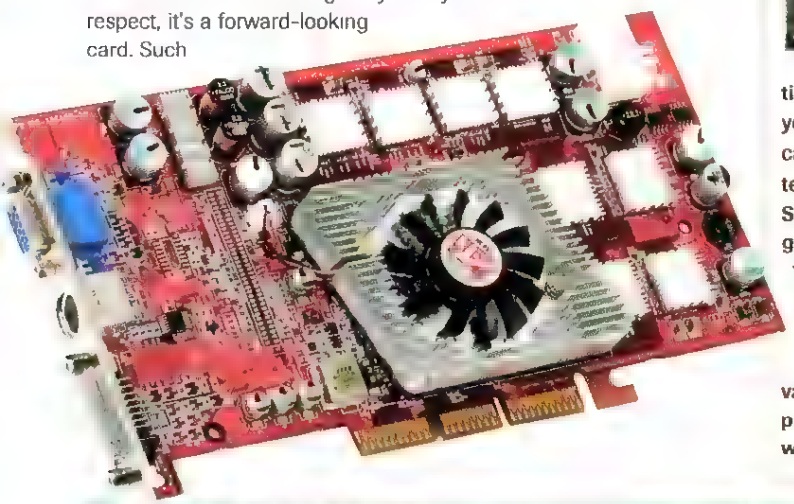
BY JASON CROSS

THERE'S LITTLE MUCH to say about the new 256MB edition of the Radeon 9800 Pro that can't be said about the 128MB version (reviewed in the June issue). That card was the typical speed-bumped six-month refresh of the 9700 Pro, one of the greatest video cards in recent memory. It was a bit disappointing in that it stuck with the same .15 micron manufacturing process and conservative clock speeds. For a $400 video card, it simply didn't offer enough of a speed boost over the 9700 Pro, and with no new features to speak of, it's only slightly above average

The 256MB version is essentially the same card, only with twice as much memory. Oh, but there is one notable change that makes it slightly more attractive: the memory is DDR2, not standard DDR, and though the default clock speed is 700MHz (only a touch higher than the 680MHz of the 128MB version), there's a whole lot of headroom to overclock both the chip and RAM. No doubt the heat sinks on the memory chips help in this regard.

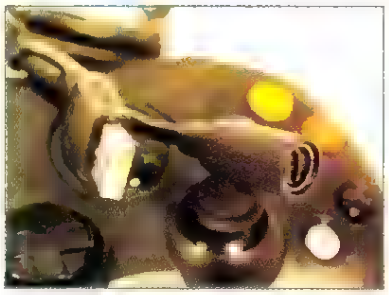
Do you need 256MB? Not yet. No game out there takes advantage of that much memory, but perhaps games that overflow the 128MB barrier are coming early next year. In that respect, it's a forward-looking card. Such insurance against future titles will cost you another $100, making this a truly expensive card, equaled only by NVIDIA's GeForce 5900 Ultra. It turns out that performance between the two are about equal as well, with each card bettering the other by a small amount on some tests, and the tables turning on others. Take your pick.

MANUFACTURER ATI • MSRP $499

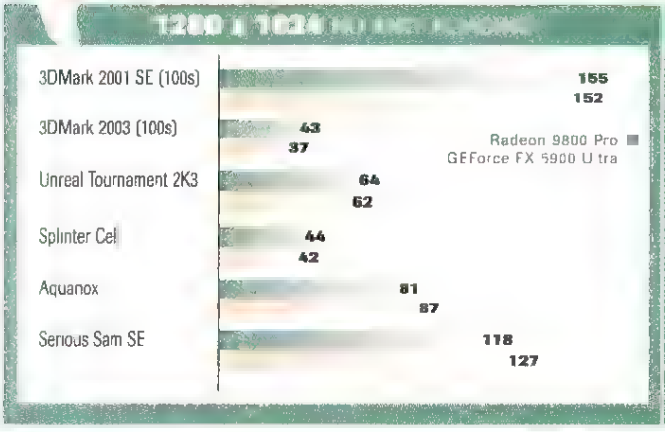


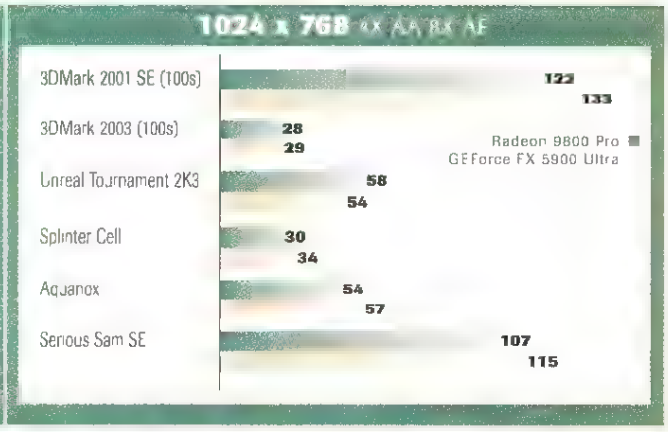
spotlight

A Better PC Gamepad



If you've ever been frustrated by the quality and features of PC gamepads, you might want to give a little product from CodeUnderground called the XCtrl a try. It's a combination cord and driver that lets you use an Xbox controller with your PC. $15 gets you a cable that plugs into your controller cable right at the little break-away spot, and adds another ten feet or so to the already substantial Xbox controller cord. Slap it into a USB port and install the XCtrl driver, and you're good to go. The driver lets you re-map buttons and joysticks to your heart's content, and even recognizes (and configures!) the analog nature of all the buttons. It worked fine with all the games we tested, including rumble effects, but this is an amateur production and your mileage may vary. It's a big step up from typical PC game pads, so if you play a lot of console ports or sports games on your PC, it's worth a shot. [XCtrl, www.codeunderground.com]





Velocity Micro Gamer's Edge

A well-priced, if somewhat generic, gaming rig

★ ★ ★ ★

YOU DON'T NEED to spend $4,000 to get a great-performing gaming system, and the latest AMD-based Gamer's Edge from Velocity Micro demonstrates that. This isn't exactly a "budget" system, but it's priced well within the reach of most gamers, and it has enough muscle to last a good long while.

At its heart, it's an Athlon XP 3200+ in an ASUS nForce2 based motherboard. This is the deluxe version, with two Ethernet ports and an built-in Serial ATA controller, which isn't used in this case, as the hard drive is a 180GB IBM Deskstar. There are two good optical drives, both from Lite-On, a 16X DVD-ROM and 52X CD-ROM. The 512MB of RAM is low-latency Corsair DDR 400. A Radeon 9800 Pro (the 128MB version) pulls video duty, and sound is left to the extremely capable nForce2 built-in audio circuitry. That's a pretty decked out system, only a couple sticks of RAM and a dual drive RAID setup away from top of the line.

It's a bit unfortunate that it's put inside the same old plain-Jane silver Chieftec Dragon case everyone has seen for ages, but at least a little flip-up door in front provides access to two USB ports and one Firewire. For a system with two venti-

2FAST &FURIOUS

www.bycvision.com

Vision Gamer Extreme TYPE 8

- Intel® Pentium® 4 - 2.8 GHz Processor
- 800MHz FSB, Hyper-Threading Technology
- ASUS® P4C800 Deluxe Motherboard
- ATI® Radeon™ 9800 PRO 128MB
- Corsair TwinX™ Matched Pair DDR PC3200
- Vision Full Tower Case w/Window
- Enermax 460 Watt Whisper Power Supply
- Zalman Performance CPU Cooling
- Western Digital® 7,200 rpm, 8MB Buffer HDD
- Lite-On 16x DVDROM Drive
- Lite-On 52x24x52x CDRW Drive
- SoundBlaster® Audigy2™ Sound Card
- Round IDE Cables
- Logitech® Keyboard and Optical Mouse
- Microsoft® Windows® XP Home Edition
- Meticulously Hand Assembled
- 12-Month Subscription to Computer Games Magazine
- 1 Year 24/7 Technical Support and On-Site Support

Extreme Gaming
Starting at $2,199

VISION PERFORMANCE GAMING SYSTEMS

FREE* SHIPPING WHEN YOU ORDER ONLINE

www.bycVISION.com

OR

ORDER TOLL FREE 800.326.9994

Building Your Computer LLC

lation fans in the back and one in the side to cool the video card, it's surprisingly quiet. Unfortunately, the hard drive is rather chatty, and you sure know it when the DVD drive spins up to full speed.

Speed is excellent, as you would expect from a system with such a high-end CPU and video card. The Athlon 3200+ is actually a bit slower than a 3.0GHz Pentium 4 with an 800MHz front-side bus, but the net effect is only a couple frames per second less performance in most games. The hard drive is particularly impressive, and while it isn't quite up to par with a good RAID setup, it's quite fast for a straight IDE drive.

When it comes right down to it, this is a system any manufacturer could build, so it's the price and other intangibles that would set it apart from the pack. As for the former, it's well-positioned. At $2,140 even, it matches a similarly configured machine from Alienware, slightly undercuts Voodoo PC, and is far cheaper than Falcon Northwest. For its intangibles, it doesn't offer much. The warranty is only for a year, and while the obligatory binder does include manuals for all your components, it doesn't really offer much in the way of information about your system. This is a typical high-end system at a good price, and one that we wouldn't have any problem recommending, but it doesn't do much to stand out from the pack. *—Jason Cross*

MANUFACTURER Velocity Micro • MSRP $2,140

Systemax Venture Double X U30

Not bad, just not for gamers

★ ★ ★

PC VENDOR SYSTEMax has been around for a long time, mostly working to supply businesses with PCs. It's new Venture Double X line aims at hardcore gamers. Though it's a good system, it doesn't really seem like the company understands its target market.

The Double X systems come in a reasonable black case and uses matching optical drives, so while the look is somewhat generic and won't exactly turn heads, it's not really an eyesore. At the time of this writing the company doesn't offer the new Pentium 4 chips based on the faster 875P motherboards with an 800MHz bus, so the test unit was equipped with a somewhat slower 3.06GHz CPU using a 533MHz bus, plugged into a motherboard using VIA's P4X400 chipset. This means the memory is DDR333 rather than DDR400, though there was a gigabyte of it. This mother board/CPU only holds back the system a little bit, with synthetic benchmarks turning out rather good but actual game performance a touch lower than a 3.0GHz 875P based reference system. Systemax also offers a Radeon 9700 Pro as its top video card, rather than the 9800 Pro

most gaming vendors have moved to. Both of these shortcomings will probably be rectified by the time you read this, but other gaming PC vendors were quicker to jump on the latest tech.

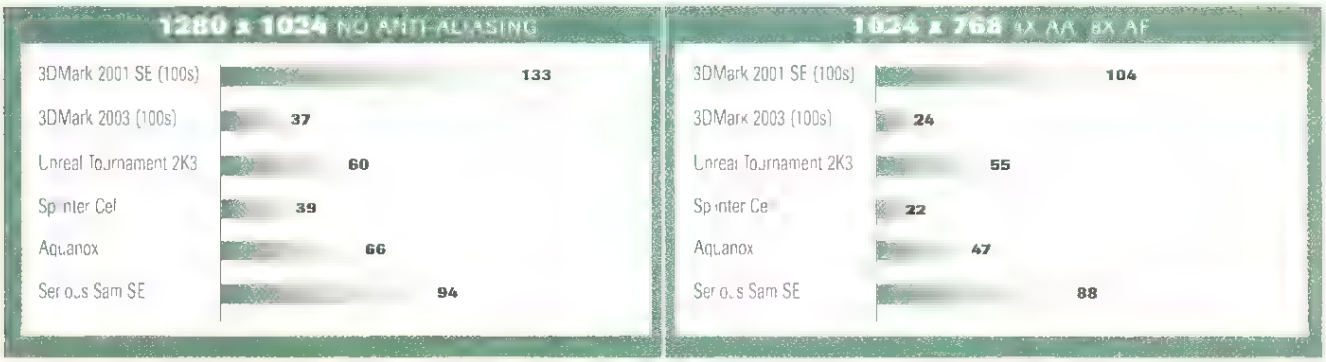
Beyond that, the system is loaded for bear. Two 120GB hard drives in a RAID array provide tons of screaming fast storage, there's both a DVD-ROM and DVD+R/-R/RW drive. It's hard not to love the small 3.5" faceplate that includes card readers for compact flash, memory stick, SD, and SmartMedia cards. The case's plain side panel comes with a replacement that includes a plastic window so you can see the blue cathode light inside. Ethernet duties are handled by an efficient Intel gigabit controller.

Curious, then, that the system relies on the motherboard's built-in audio, which isn't awful, but not up to the standards of the best sound cards. It's annoying that it provides 5.1 audio by using the microphone and line-in jacks, too. There are a few other things that gamers are sure not to appreciate, like the way that the system comes with about a dozen icons on the desktop for pre-installed software (including AOL, Earthlink, MSN, training software, the Quicktime player, and so on). Though the Windows installation was mostly up to date, DirectX 9 had not been installed. The hard drive has a 5GB partition reserved for a drive image to restore the system, which shows up as a D: drive all the time even though you don't really want to touch it. Last but certainly not least, the 17" LCD monitor not only performs poorly in games, but also has an annoying blue light around its controls that can't be turned off. Naturally this monitor, as well as the truly excellent Klipsch 5.1 speakers that came with our test system, are optional.

It seems these days like everyone is trying to break into the enthusiast gaming PC market. And while they can all put together a high-end machine, not every company really understands what gamers want. Systemax would do well to lose the excessive software bundle, the visible D: drive for the system restore image, toss in a sound card, and come back at the gaming market fresh with after a lot more focus testing and market research. This isn't a bad computer by any means, but it simply feels like someone slapped a clear window, blue light, and high-end video card in a high-end business machine and decided to market it toward gamers.

– Jason Cross

MANUFACTURER Systemax • MSRP $2,349, $3106 with monitor and speakers

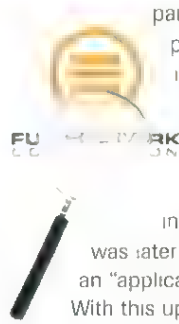


HARDWARE TEST PLATFORM Unless otherwise stated, the base platform for all benchmarks is as follows. **CPU** Pentium 4 3.0GHz **RAM** 512MB dual DDR 400 **MOTHERBOARD** D875PBZ (875P chipset) **HARD DRIVE** two Seagate Barracuda 120GB SATA in RAID 0 array **AUDIO** Sound Blaster Audigy 2

Caught!

Futuremark detects driver "optimizations" for 3DMark 2003

BY JASON CROSS



BENCHMARK MAKER Futuremark recently discovered, along with its beta program partners, that NVIDIA's most recent drivers detect that the benchmark is running and cut several corners to produce an inflated score. The drivers specifically use the pre-defined camera path of the benchmark scenes to reduce workload by clipping out unseen parts of some scenes, or skipping buffer clears. Futuremark issued a patch that does not alter any of the tests, but it defeats the driver's capability to detect the program and use what Futuremark initially said was a cheat but was later described by the company as an "application specific optimization" With this update, our benchmark scores with the GeForce FX 5900 Ultra fell from 4525 to 3710 at a resolution of 1280x1024, a difference of 22%. At 1024x768 with 4X anti-aliasing and 8X anisotropic filtering enabled, the score dropped from 3406 to 2927, a difference of 16%.

The new version also reveals a that ATI's driver detects the program as well, though their shortcut is far more benign and affects only the fourth game test. They made the following statement. "We render the scene exactly as intended by Futuremark, in full-precision floating point. Our shaders are mathematically and functionally identical to Futuremark's and there are no visual artifacts; we simply shuffle instructions to take advantage of our architecture." ATI will remove this optimization in their next drivers. With the 3DMark patch, our scores for a 9800 Pro dropped less than 2%.

You can find Futuremark's audit explaining the whole situation in detail at www.futuremark.com/companyinfo/3dmark03_audit_report.pdf.

applied game theory

Democratizing Games

The media, race, and the "games industry"

BY HENRY JENKINS AND KURT SQUIRE

Several years ago, the National Alliance, a white supremacist group, released a PC based game called *Ethnic Cleansing* Billed as the "most politically incorrect video game ever made," it allows players to "run through the ghetto blasting away various blacks and spics in an attempt to gain entrance to the subway system where the Jews have hidden to avoid the carnage" There's no question that it's an ugly and hateful game its Jews are cowardly and have huge hooked noses; its "negros" [sic] make ape noises when they are shot. As the group is preparing to release a sequel, news reports are warning parents about the latest outrage from the "games industry." These images usually repulse anyone not already predisposed towards racism, but such games can be an important recruitment tool for hate groups. NBC claimed that some fifty percent of those who bought the original *Ethnic Cleansing* game returned to the site to buy other white power materials

"We don't call the Ku Klux Klan the fashion industry just because they make and sell robes."

It takes an awfully expansive definition to describe this title as coming from the "games industry." *Ethnic Cleansing* was made by a fringe political organization using the open source Genesis 3D engine and was sold via the web directly to consumers We don't call the Ku Klux Klan the fashion industry just because they make and sell robes. As most gamers know and few reporters recognize, low cost software and mod development kits have expanded the range of people who are creating games and the web has become an important distribution channel for all kinds of games not be found at your local Wal Mart. This has created new spaces for game design as self expression or political activism, which needs to be protected. A spokesman for the Anti-Defamation League recently argued that Wild Tangent, which now owns the Genesis 3D engine, should bear "a certain responsibility" over what gets done with its tools, an approach on the order of fining the people who make magic markers for every obscenity written on a bathroom wall.

When we were approached recently by reporters tracking this story, we tried to show them how these same tools were being used by groups to combat racism but were told that the public would have little interest

Consider, for example, *Tropical America*, a web-based Flash-animation game released last Columbus Day by the Los Angeles based nonprofit arts organization, OnRamp. The player assumes the role of the sole survivor of a 1981 massacre in El Salvador, attempting to investigate what happened to this village and why. In the process, you explore some 500 years of the history of the colonization of Latin America, examining issues of racial genocide, cultural dominance, and the erasure of history. Winners of the game become "Heroes of the Americas" and in the process uncover the name of another victim of the actual slaughter

Tropical America emerged from several years of media literacy projects around gaming, which OnRamp conducted in Belmont High School, a 90 percent Latino public school in downtown Los Angeles. Some 25 students, mostly from immigrant families, worked with local artists to design and develop the game Its name comes from a controversial mural created by David Alfaro Siqueiros, its surreal approach was inspired by the Magical Realist literature from Latin America; and its look was developed in collaboration with a local woodcut artist Juan Devis. Students were encouraged to think about their own cultural identities by creating digital superhero characters, and they were encouraged to think about what motivates gameplay, such as the differences between blasting away hundreds of attackers and preventing the slaughter of the local peasants. Students then studied the history of the colonization of Latin America and turned historical incidents into game missions, puzzles, and avatars.

OnRamp's efforts are not unique in getting digital toolsets into the hands of minority kids and helping them learn to express themselves via games. Game Lab, the independent games company famous for *Blix* and *Sissy Fight 2000*, is currently working with the New York-based Global Kidz program to develop a web based game focusing on racial profiling and air travel. Mongrel, a British based mixed race collective, has done several projects helping inner city kids in London design video games, many of which deal with racism.

The resulting games are often technically simple. They no more represent the state of the games industry than *Ethnic Cleansing* does. But they do illustrate how democratizing game design can result in a more diverse range of game themes, aesthetics, and play styles including games that make social and political statements.

So why isn't NBC doing special reports on these games?

Henry Jenkins and Kurt Squire run the Games to Teach Project at MIT. Jenkins is the Director of the Comparative Media Studies Program; Squire is finishing his doctoral degree in Education from Indiana University You can find more information on the program at cms.mit.edu/games/education

On the Fringe

A booth-less reflection on the E3 experience

BY CINDY YANS

In the past (except for once), I've avoided discussing the annual Electronic Entertainment Exposition in this editorial because (a) we generally include an overall show report, (b) by the time you read this, the show itself will have taken place several months ago, and (c) if you do care about this event, you probably monitored online coverage during the week it was happening. But I'm going to do it anyway because (a) there's no bigger gathering of game-geeks anywhere, (b) some of the atmospheric and social conditions are worth a retrospective, and (c) the nostalgic *View from the Middle* editorial on page 96 inspired me to relate a view from the fringe.

E3 is now in its ninth year with over 62,000 attendees. When I last discussed it, I focused mostly on eye-candy booth demonstrators, one of whom (after scurrying off to ask somebody else) answered my "What system specs are you running this on?" question with, "I think it's a [looking a bit doubtful, but then remembering] Pinnium!"

E3 is loud. I try very hard to get information amidst the melee and throbbing musical techno-boom (read "BoomBoom BoomBoom BoomBoom BoomBoom") that eventually reduces everyone to laryngitis—some sooner than others. Being too short to locate my ear anywhere near the speaker's mouth doesn't help. Conversations usually go something like this:

"Hi!" [BoomBoom BoomBoom BoomBoom BoomBoom]

"I'm—" [BoomBoom BoomBoom BoomBoom BoomBoom]

"Yes. Well. What are you showing here?"

[BoomBoom BoomBoom BoomBoom BoomBoom]

"Yes. Well. Thank you very much."

All followed by an exchange of business cards. After a couple of years of this you discover that the best way to avoid a headache is to only commit to seeing things "By Appointment-Only-Behind-Closed-Doors." Sure it sounds stuffy, and it is, but at least you have half a chance of hearing what's going on instead of no chance at all. And sometimes when they say "Appointment Only," they really, really mean it. On day three, representatives tried to keep Elijah Wood out of the *Middle Earth Online* demo because he didn't have An Appointment. After that, hopefully, they still had A Job.

Each morning when the show floor opens, the fan boys, who have been lining up for hours, burst through the doors to the West and South Halls in what is tantamount to attending the running of the bulls in Pamplona—scary. In 2001, it was a life-threatening risk to stand anywhere between the 64 and the debut of the GameCube. In 2002, the areas around the theatres for *Medal of Honor* and *DOOM 3* were the places where you were "Most Likely to Get Trampled." This year it was the area around the roped off entrance to the *Half Life 2* demo. I (thank goodness) had An Appointment. I approached the roped-off area and noted that the line of people without An Appointment stretched "all the way back to Topeka." Inching closer, being jostled, shoved, mauled, and otherwise thwarted by the people without An Appointment (who were simultaneously trying to (a) insist that they had An Appointment, (b) insist that they were important enough to have had An Appointment, or (c) run interference and sneak in), I finally got the attention of The Bouncer. In 2002, the *Medal of Honor* Bouncer was a tall, buff guy in a military-uniform with a stern expression. With *Half-Life 2*, it was a petite, polite brunette public relations woman who I'm really surprised escaped with her life.

The Los Angeles convention center has 770,000 square feet of exhibit space and 54 meeting rooms over three levels. This is equivalent to the size of 33 football fields. It produces thirst. I tried to keep a water bottle from the hotel full the entire time, but often found myself begging for some at

> *"I do try very hard to get information amidst the melee and throbbing musical techno-boom that eventually reduces everyone to laryngitis..."*

An Appointment, or purchasing a 20 ounce bottle for four dollars from the E3 concessions (home of the nine dollar gristle-burger and the fourteen-dollar turkey sandwich). By day three, none of the companies had any water left (or wouldn't admit it), nor did most of the concessions. A wild-eyed guy with green hair approached me and pointed to my half-empty water bottle.

"Whoooaa...where'd you get that?!" he asked enviously. "At the back concession in Kentia Hall—underneath South," I replied. "Duuuude—I'm not goin' down there," he said. "Can I buy it offa ya?" "No way." Of course you generally don't place blame on people who avoid Kentia Hall (home of Honey Bee Electronics, Cheeky Wireless, and J.F.J. Disc Repair).

It's a madhouse, and I wonder sometimes why I choose to—no, actually I like to—go. The gist can probably be summed up with just a few examples: it's (a) an almost-guaranteed chance to catch a glimpse of Gary Coleman, (b) a chance to see the area Laker fans riot when they lose to San Antonio, and (c) one of the only places in the universe with no waiting line in the ladies' room.

Homecoming Queens

Thoughts on the Electronic Entertainment Expo

BY KEVIN LEVINE

E3 is the industry's annual homecoming dance. Some products blossom, others wither. One platform proves ascendant while the others fight for the scraps. After this dance, some return homecoming queens, others come home jilted wallflowers.

The first time Irrational showed a game on the floor was 1999. We were about to unveil *System Shock 2* to the public for the first time. We were tucked away in the corner of the EA booth, which, if you have not seen it, is roughly two thirds the size of Staten Island. EA had been kind enough to authorize the manufacture of a giant 3D SHODAN head (the *Shock 2* digital *femme fatale*) to be placed above our kiosk. As of the night before the show, the giant SHODAN head had not made her appearance. I started to freak out.

"So the third lesson of E3 is: look past the 'game of show' games. Sometimes the wallflowers are more fun to dance with."

Me: "Where's the giant SHODAN head?"

Just-doing-his-job EA marketing guy: "Probably on one of the fifteen tractor-trailers lined up outside unloading our booth."

Me: "What if she's not here when the show starts?"

Just-doing-his-job EA marketing guy: "Then your booth won't have a giant head above it."

He popped a Mento into his mouth and went back to a gaggle of marketing types who were anxiously prepping the kiosk for the latest James Bond game. E3 lesson one: It helps to be 007. Mr. Bond was worth millions of dollars to EA, a lot more than Ms. SHODAN.

We were taken into a back room and given a briefing by the EA public relations staff. Now mind you, this around a month after the Columbine shootings and the publishers were understandably nervous about the "violence in video game" feeding frenzy. The mainstream press was at the show not to really cover the industry, but looking for a story with a title along the lines of "Why Videogame Makers Want to Train Your Kids to Kill." The publishers, being corporations with responsibilities to lots of shareholders who likely watch the evening news, were less than anxious to give them that story. Until the last minute, it seemed like they were going to pull the game from the show floor entirely. And the word came from on high: "You can show the game, with one catch: you can't show any guns."

Now if you haven't played it, *System Shock 2* is the bastard child of a first-person shooter and a role-playing game. Unfortunately for us, that meant that a good deal of the game involved you walking around staring at the back of a pistol. Did we pull the game? Of course not. What did we say when some CBS reporter shoved a camera in our face and asked us if our game was a "murder simulator?"

"Well, we look at it more as a hybrid of an emergent world simulation with strong role playing elements. While there are first person shooter elements, the player's given a broad toolset and provided nearly infinite control as to how he approaches the play space."

Hah! Put that on the evening news!

E3 Lesson Two: Sometimes the game is not the story.

Having a game on the floor is a numbing combination of a Benzedrine fueled press tour and waiting to be chosen in a third grade kickball game. You sit there with a smiling face, waiting for adoring crowds to appear around your game. You watch glumly as said adoring crowds head over to points Sony or points Nintendo.

E3 has improved greatly for Irrational from those first moments, especially this year, when I got to sit in Vivendi's press room, eat delicious brownies, and natter on about *Tribes Vengeance* and *Freedom Force* all day long, but there's one thing I've learned living through seven of these things. Gamers are smarter than the games industry. Why? Because we industry types fall all over ourselves at the biggest kiosks, the hottest booth babes, and the most carcinogenic giant plasma screens. But gamers still find good games. Here are some notable, small titles that nobody ever paid attention to when they came out at E3 in years past: *Tony Hawk Pro Skater*, *RollerCoaster Tycoon*, *Pokemon*, *Battlefield 1942*, *Grand Theft Auto III*, and *The Sims*.

Because I'm a gentleman, I won't go into the products that "stole E3" and then proceeded to stink up the place when they finally got in front of the real audience, the gamer. So the third lesson of E3 is: Look past the "game of show" games. Sometimes the wallflowers are more fun to dance with. G

Ken Levine is the General Manager and Creative Director of Irrational Games

RIGHT TURN IN FRONT OF BUS IS ILLEGAL
5431
Why Wait? EarthLink High Speed Internet is always on, so you're always on. You move up to 50-times faster than dial-up and won't get stuck in traffic. Get your FIRST MONTH FREE when you CALL 1-800-EARTHLINK and
Move to EarthLink.™

©2002 Ear... trademarks of EarthLink.
12/31/02. Yo... new residential EarthLink High
subscribers. Se... restrictions, taxes and fees ma...
Minimum term ... apply. Call 1-800-EAR...

You Only Live Twice

Monolith and Vivendi Universal do what H.A.R.M. couldn't

BY BRETT TODD

Cate Archer deserved better.

The groovy spy babe from the Age of Aquarius seems to have died a quiet death with the retail failure of last winter's *No One Lives Forever 2: A Spy in H.A.R.M.'s Way*. While you'll have noticed from this month's cover story that a stand-alone expansion/prequel is on the way this fall, it replaces our paisley-clad secret agent with a guy and changes the focus to more traditional shooter action. If *Contract JACK* is successful, will Cate only live twice? While both the latest game and its predecessor had problems—emphasizing the Lara Croft x-factor in a first-person game where you only got to see the heroine's charms in cutscenes and reflections was a little annoying, as was the overly quirky storyline—they should have received a better fate at the cash register. Monolith gave us real character and fantastic innovations with gameplay mechanics, to which anyone who employed the banana peel in a tight spot would attest.

What's really frustrating about this situation is that *NOLF 2* wasn't given a chance to catch on with gamers. One of the most important facets of a shooter is mod support, but Monolith and its publishers at Vivendi Universal chose to ignore this community for months. Although the game arrived at the end of last September, deathmatch play wasn't added until the version 1.2 update, posted at the end of November. Further official mods were held back until mid-March, when version 1.3 debuted with bug fixes and the Team Deathmatch and Doomsday modes of play. The Editing and Source Code Tool Kit didn't see the light of day until early May, by which point the game in question had been dumped into the bargain bin.

> *"You want to make a blockbuster today, you'd better toss in a lot of bells and whistles. Even if they're half-assed, because crappy tools and editors are better than no tools and editors at all."*

It's great that all these add-ons and editing toys will be available right away for those who buy the prequel, but this whole thing was handled poorly. If you're going to make mod support a selling feature, you've got to get tools available as soon as the game hits stores, or sooner. Recent examples prove that waiting isn't a good policy. EA Sports turned up the thermostat for *FIFA 2003* by releasing the Creation Center editor before the game was published last fall, a strategy that allowed modders to have new league and player files online before anyone even got the chance to rip off the shrinkwrap. Relic Entertainment jumped the gun on the *Impossible Creatures* launch by unveiling the Relic Developer's Network, an online resource designed to assist mod developers, and the IC Tools editor. Even Atari, which somehow managed to downgrade *Unreal II: The Awakening* from one of the biggest blockbuster sequels of the past few years into a pipsqueak that couldn't compete on the charts with *Backyard Baseball*, got the mod thing right. The game might not have contained any multiplayer options, but at least it featured the *Unreal Editor* and the box blurb highlighted how it could be used. Fans have already come up with king of the hill and botmatch mods, which is remarkable when you consider how many people gave the game a pass due to missing multiplayer and the 10 hour single-player campaign.

These are just a few of the many ways to make sure that mod community support is tied in with a game launch. Every developer and publisher uses slightly different strategies. Except for Vivendi, which apparently didn't use any strategy at all when promoting *NOLF 2*. Unless you've got a certifiable smash waiting in the wings—and very little qualifies for that status right now aside from *Half-Life 2* and *Doom 3*—you can't get away with ignoring modders. In an age where two or three nights' play will get you through the solo missions in most shooters, every game should come with publisher and developer guarantees that consumers will get more bytes for the buck than what's on the disc. You want to make a blockbuster today, you'd better toss in a lot of bells and whistles. Even if they're half-assed, because crappy tools and editors are better than no tools and editors at all.

NOLF 2 also provides a cautionary tale for publishers planning the roll-outs of this year's titles that aren't sure-fire, knock-'em-out-of-the-park hits. Eidos should take note of what happened here and make sure that the same fate doesn't befall its own quirky, bubbling-under cult franchises *Deus Ex* and *Thief*. Neither *Deus Ex: Invisible War* or *Thief 3* is a guaranteed chart topper, despite effervescent preview prose. Good games are still needed underneath all the snazzy editors and toolkits—although tossing in these frills makes it easier for us to discover those good games and gives modders a chance to make them great. G

Be Prepared

The next gaming revolution is almost upon us

BY JASON CROSS

I am often asked what the Next Big Thing in games will be. By "often" of course I mean "some guy sent me email about it once." Seriously, this topic comes up from time to time, in part because everyone wants to catch the next wave. The last one was when, in the span of about two or three years, we saw the majority of games on computers, in arcades, and on home consoles go from 2D to 3D. With this change came an explosion in popularity.

I believe we are on the verge of that Next Big Thing, and it's not something as simple and concrete as the leap from 2D to 3D. It is, for lack of a better term, believability. A combination of 3D graphics fidelity, animation quality, physics, world interaction, sound propagation systems, and so on, all coming together to create convincing games. If it sounds like I'm talking about *Half-Life 2* that's just because it's ahead of the curve. We've seen snippits of this believability in the games of the last few years—the character animation in *No One Lives Forever*, rag-doll physics, the echo of gunfire in *Medal of Honor*. But as hi-fi as our games are, they're still recognizably gamey. Oh sure, we don't see it because we're gamers. But normal people look at the screen and don't see what we see. There's a certain suspension of disbelief that's simply not there, and it's hard to get emotionally involved (and addicted to) something you're detached from.

The day is coming, real soon now, where regular old non-game-playing people will look at the screen and not see levels and models, but places and people. The world will look correct and sound correct and react as one would expect it to, at least in the Hollywood sense. If you think *The Sims* addicted a lot of casual gamers, wait until you see what the exponentially higher fidelity of *The Sims 2* does for the franchise. Of course, we're only on the verge of this new wave of games that are detailed and rich enough in visuals, sound, and interaction to push past the "games are for dorks" sensibilities of your average citizen as only sports games have thus far really been successful at. As a hardcore gamer, I'm sure you want to be ready for it. You need a rig that can handle it. You need more juice.

Look at our cover feature. Of the 13 games there, all but two deliver the kind of really high resolution, high-density graphics that can pull even strong machines to their knees. *Half-Life 2*, the PC version of *Halo*, *EverQuest 2*, *Deus Ex*, *Thief*... there are literally dozens of games right around the corner that will benefit from video cards with lots of memory bandwidth and the ability to handle shaders with ease. If you've been holding onto that GeForce 3, you're going to need something with a bigger cajones. Six of the games on our list are massively-multiplayer online games. These take enormous amounts of system RAM and can eat up CPU power like it's candy.

> *"The day is coming where regular old non-game-playing people will look at the screen and not see levels and models, but places and people."*

If you want to be ready for the next big wave of games, you need a pretty good rig. You need a CPU of at least 2GHz. You need at least 512MB of RAM, and already some online games push way past that boundary with the detail levels turned up. You need a nice video card, something that can handle Vertex and Pixel shaders 2.0 like a GeForce FX, Radeon 9500, or better. Unfortunately, skimping on some low-end DX9-capable card isn't going to cut it. Those games that make use of the cool new shaders to look so fantastic also make use of high-res textures, push around a lot of polygons, and in general demand lots of fill rate and memory bandwidth as well. It's no use buying a $129 DX9 card if you have to turn all the details down to medium to get a decent framerate. And let's not forget hard drive space, because you can expect these games to suck up several gigabytes each.

Fortunately, we're only just entering this new phase of uber games, so you have a few months to prepare. We'll see powerful new CPUs from both AMD and Intel, a new wave of amazing graphics cards, and lower RAM prices. You'll be able to get the computer you need for those hardware hungry titles for like $1500 or less. If you need to buy right now, start by pumping your RAM to 512MB or more and pick up a Radeon 9700 Pro before they're out of stock and are totally replaced by the pricier 9800 Pro. And don't worry about a 256MB graphics card, they're not going to be necessary for awhile.

Back Page Ethics

Integrity, now more than ever

BY TOM CHICK

[We here at Computer Games Magazine *take our responsibility to journalistic integrity with the utmost seriousness. So we'd like to head off the controversy that has been raised in other publications by announcing that Tom Chick has been temporarily suspended, with pay, pending investigation into his alleged ethical lapses.*

First, it has come to our attention that Rise of Nations *is, in fact, at least a four and a half star game and not a four star game as Mr. Chick reported in last month's. We strive for factual reviews that accurately reflect the opinions of our readers. Discrepancies like these can damage our credibility. If it turns out that Mr. Chick's rating is in error, we will publish a full retraction in the next issue, in very small print, under those letters you skim to see if yours got in.*

> **"...we have received several complaints in which readers were suspicious as to whether Mr. Chick had factually reported his opinion of a game."**

Also, it has come to light that Mr. Chick reviewed the expansion for Anarchy Online, *a MMORPG offering countless hours of gameplay, after reaching only 20th level when the game actually supports characters up to 200th level. Similarly, it has come to our attention that Mr. Chick played the Chinese real-time strategy game* Militarism *for only about two hours before giving it 1/2 star and turning in a review that made fun of the bad translation.*

In addition, we have received several complaints in which readers were suspicious as to whether Mr. Chick had factually reported his opinion of a game. Many readers noted that he nowhere discussed whether the game in question was fun. At the very least, this conspicuous lack of important information calls Mr. Chick's thoroughness into question. At the worst, it implies that he hasn't even installed the game, which is the requisite first step to having fun.

*Furthermore, it is believed that he has conducted various interviews via email, which were falsely portrayed as if he were in the presence of his subject. He has written as if he were witnessing a physical reaction, such as "*Black & White 2 *will be more fun because it will have ten times more poo," laughs Molyneux, when the comment was made via email, so Mr. Chick would have had no knowledge of whether Mr. Molyneux was laughing. He has since confessed that not only has he never met Molyneux, but he has no idea how to pronounce his name.*

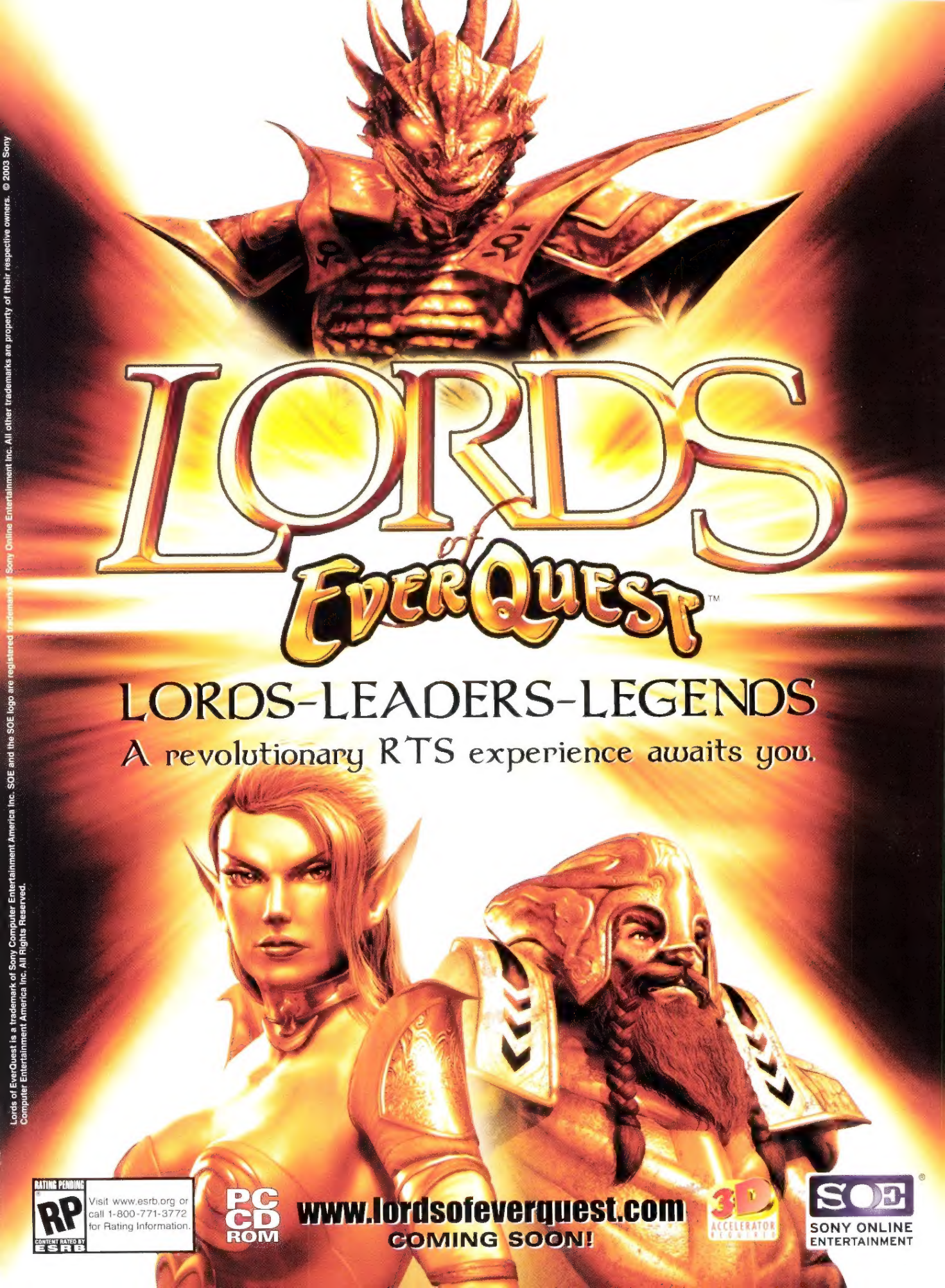
Similarly, Mr. Chick has ended interviews with comments like "Thanks for taking the time to answer our questions" when the interviewee never even heard the comment because it was simply appended at the end of the interview. We don't condone our journalists falsifying on-location reporting.

There are also allegations of plagiarism. Mr. Chick has used phrases that have appeared elsewhere, like "silky smooth graphics," "non-existent AI," and "mixed bag." He once concluded a review of an expansion pack with the observation that "if you didn't like [game name deleted], *the expansion pack won't change your mind, but if you did like* [game name deleted], *you'll probably want to pick up this expansion pack." In interviews, he has asked questions presumably borrowed from other journalists, such as "How many levels will there be in this game?" "Will it have multiplayer?" and "If you were stranded on a desert island and could only have one game, what would it be?" He has made fun of crates,* Daikatana, *and bad rag doll physics, references repeatedly made in other publications, thus lending credence to accusations of plagiarism.*

We have also heard that last year, Mr. Chick wore white shoes after Labor Day. While we welcome edgy behavior among our journalists, such as going on press junkets and getting drunk with people who freelance for Maxim *and* Wired, *or using the 's' word in a headline for the* Vietcong *review, we must draw the line at certain ethical lapses, particularly if we want to maintain our reputation as the most grown-up magazine. I mean, seriously, flip back a couple of pages if you don't believe me: we have actual professors writing columns for us.*

While looking into these allegations, we are considering applications for Mr. Chick's replacement and have accepted resumes from established journalists like Jayson Blair and Rick Bragg, who we think we can get for really cheap. -ed.]

Computer Games Magazine (ISSN 0955-4424) is published monthly by Strategy Plus, Inc. Subscription rate is $19.97 for a one year subscription, $31.97 Canada. Periodical postage paid at Richmond, VT 05477 and additional mailing offices. **Produced in U.S.A.**
Postmaster: Send address changes to Computer Games, PO Box 1965, Marion, OH 43306.



Lords of EverQuest is a trademark of Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. SOE and the SOE logo are registered trademarks of Sony Online Entertainment Inc. All other trademarks are property of their respective owners. © 2003 Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. All Rights Reserved.

Extinction Is NOT An Option!

We have the courage. We have the tactics. We have the artillery.

USC UNITED SPACE CORPS

VOLUNTEER FOR THE USC.

Command your own elite squad, be brutal and be feared! Your boys know how to party: with jets, buggies, tanks, APCs and a deadly arsenal, blast the Breed to smithereens!

For the sake of the Earth's future.

COMING IN THE 2nd HALF OF 2003!

© 2003 CDV Software Entertainment AG.

WWW.BREEDGAME.COM

cdv

Brat

POWERED BY gamespy

GameSpy and the "Powered by GameSpy" design are trademarks of GameSpy Industries, Inc. All rights reserved.

the way it's meant to be played NVIDIA

RATING PENDING RP CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Visit www.esrb.org or call 1-800-771-3772 for Rating Information.

Made with love by

Our goal is to preserve classic video game magazines so that they are not lost permanently.

People interested in helping out in any capacity, please visit us at retromags.com.

No profit is made from these scans, nor do we offer anything available from the publishers themselves.

If you come across anyone selling releases from this site, please do not support them and do let us know.

Thank you!